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UNESCO in Action for GENDER EQUALITY

2024
2025

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SHORT SUMMARY

Advancing Gender Equality in an Era of Unpredictable Change

As we mark thirty years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the global landscape for gender equality presents a complex interplay of setbacks and advances.

Cascading crises from climate change to armed conflict disproportionately impact women educators, scientists, journalists, artists and learners. They have challenged UNESCO to anticipate and lead with a gender perspective in unexplored areas such as biodiversity, ocean and water management and to engage men and boys as allies in the fight against gender stereotypes in culture, the media and sports.

Advancing digital technologies have enabled the rise of technology facilitated gender-based violence with severe consequences on the mental health and physical safety of women and girls. The invisibility of women leaders in the field of culture have also inspired UNESCO to restore the representation of women in the narratives expressed through heritage sites, living heritage elements, museum collections, in archives or in the media, in particular, across Africa.

19%

of UNESCO's budget is dedicated to gender equality which is among the highest percentage across the United Nations

As the UN system implements its Gender Equality Acceleration Plan and Member States commit to revitalizing multilateralism for gender equality, UNESCO stands at the forefront of translating global commitments into tangible change.

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"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed"

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Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, visits Mosul to mark the successful completion of UNESCO's Reviving the Spirit of Mosul initiative, which contributed to fostering gender equality in the recovery of the city's cultural and intellectual life.

© UNESCO/Luay Al Zrare

Message of the **Director-General**

Upon winning the 2024 L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Caribbean Young Talent Award, Dr Savanna Lloyd, a physicist from the University of the West Indies, said, *"I felt I lacked the strategic position to truly contribute. I didn't feel ready. But when I learned I had received the award, I knew I was."*

Amid the increasing uncertainty of the past biennium, UNESCO has continued to stand firm in its mission, taking action to defend the rights of women and girls and empower them to shape a brighter future. Dr Lloyd's inspiring words are a testament to our success.

Our efforts begin in the classroom. Over the last two years, 27 million learners have benefitted from UNESCO's work to reduce bias and stereotypes in curricula, learning materials and teaching practices. Meanwhile, a total of 89 countries, including all 54 countries in Africa, have reviewed their national STEM education systems to close persistent gender gaps in the fields of science and technology.

UNESCO's Call to Action to Close the Gender Gap in Science mobilized over 8,000 experts worldwide, recognizing women as leaders, innovators and holders of vital knowledge. Our efforts to advance gender equality reached across continents into oceans, where ten small island developing States implemented gender-responsive ecosystem and biodiversity initiatives.

In the cultural sphere, our Organization has continued working to ensure that the principles of gender equality are embedded in cultural policies. Action taken at MONDIACULT 2025 and within the wider post-2030 development framework reinforce the centrality of cultural rights and the creative economy in empowering women and girls.

As new challenges emerge, UNESCO's action continues to evolve. Generative artificial intelligence, for instance, has been shown to reproduce harmful stereotypes and enable gender-based violence – which is why UNESCO published a guide this year for individuals to address gender biases in artificial intelligence. Our Organization has also expanded its Women4Ethical AI Platform to ensure that women are represented equally in the development of this technology.

Recognizing that women are disproportionately affected by conflict, UNESCO also works to ensure that gender equality is a core part of post-conflict recovery. This is what we did during the reconstruction of the historic city of Mosul, where we provided heritage training for young Iraqi women, empowering them to help build lasting peace.

Far too often, the pursuit of gender equality is overlooked amid broader challenges. Our efforts to ensure that both our programming and workforce reflect the principle of gender equality were acknowledged by the recent MOPAN assessment and the UN-SWAP that placed UNESCO among the top-performing United Nations entities in this respect.

This publication testifies to how far we have come, but also to how far remains to go. May the successes of the past biennium inspire our continued collective action in the years to come.

Audrey Azoulay

UNESCO'S GLOBAL PRIORITY GENDER EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Reduce inequalities and promote learning and creative societies in the digital age through quality education for all

Work towards sustainable societies by preserving the environment through the promotion of science, technology and the natural heritage

GENDER EQUALITY FOCUS

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION

EMPOWER WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

AREAS OF WORK

ACCESS | CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGIES | STEM

- Access to equitable and gender-responsive education and learning, including in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is widened
- Laws, policies & strategies for gender equality in and through education developed and implemented
- Gender-responsive teaching, content and learning opportunities are increased
- Gender gap in learning achievements and completion rates reduced

▶ *Contributing to SDG Targets 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.7*

SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP | ECOSYSTEMS & BIODIVERSITY | WATER & OCEANS

- Women's careers in decision-making positions advanced and role models promoted
- Gender transformative science, technology and innovation (STI) policies and Open Science policies enhanced
- Women's and girls' resilience and action for sustainable management of natural resources reinforced
- Gender responsive water and ocean's management and governance promoted

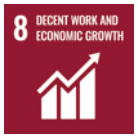
▶ *Contributing to SDG Target 5.5*

CROSS CUTTING THEME

WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY:

ACTIONS

- Awareness raised through advocacy campaigns and public debates
- Capacities and skills strengthened
- National laws, policies and strategies elaboration and revision supported



Build inclusive, just and peaceful societies by promoting freedom of expression, cultural diversity, education for global citizenship, and protecting the heritage

PROMOTE INCLUSION AND COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

DISCRIMINATION & STEREOTYPES | **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION & CREATION** | **DECENT WORK & SOCIAL PROTECTION**

- Gender-based threats, violence, discrimination and stereotypes tackled, including in the digital environment
- Learners and learning environments equipped to be safe and healthy
- Women's working conditions, employment opportunities and economic, cultural and social rights improved
- Gender equality promoted in and through the media and cultural sectors

▶ ***Contributing to SDG Targets 4.2a, 5.1, 5.2, 5.6, 8.5, 8.8, 16.10***

Foster a technological environment in the service of humankind through the development and dissemination of knowledge and skills and the development of ethical standards

BRIDGE THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE

ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR AI & DIGITAL PLATFORMS | **MEDIA & INFORMATION LITERACY** | **DIGITAL SKILLS & COMPETENCIES**

- Ethical standards addressing gender bias in digital technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) systems developed and implemented
- Equitable and gender responsive access to and use of information and knowledge fostered in the digital environment
- Women and girls empowered with digital skills and competencies
- Women's leadership in AI and the digital environment supported

▶ ***Contributing to SDG Target 5.b***

CRISIS PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- Information, knowledge and data collected, analysed and shared
- Technical assistance and policy advice provided
- Partnerships and networks established, strengthened and fostered

Table of CONTENTS

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION

p. 10

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

EMPOWER WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

p. 26

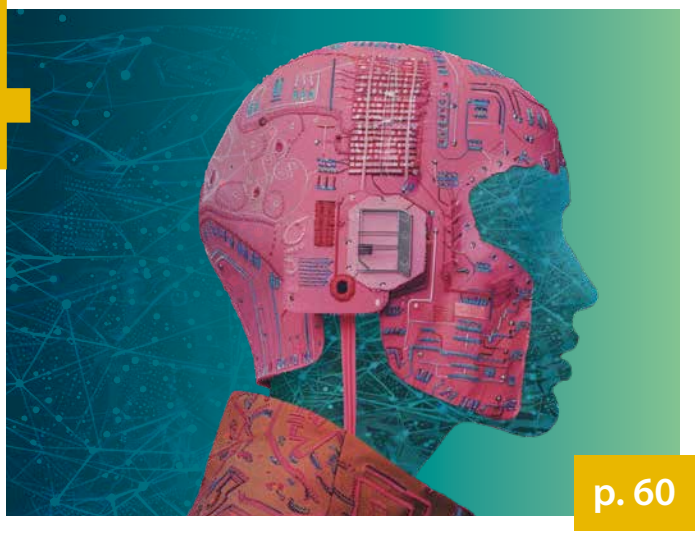
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

PROMOTE INCLUSION AND COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

p. 42

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

BRIDGE THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE



p. 60

CROSS-CUTTING THEME

WOMEN AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS, EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND EARLY RECOVERY

p. 76

Gender Equality at UNESCO p. 92

UNESCO's Global Community p. 100

In Closing p. 108

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

1

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION

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Many structural factors can perpetuate gender disparities in education, development and civic participation. To achieve gender equality in education across the globe, we must sustain our efforts to ensure that every learner has the opportunities and supportive environments they need to succeed.

Audrey Azoulay
Director-General of UNESCO

UNESCO reduces inequalities and promotes learning and creative societies in the digital age through quality education for all by strengthening education systems to be gender-transformative and empowering girls and women, boys and men, to chart a better life and a better future through education.

Reduce inequalities and promote learning and creative societies in the digital age through quality education for all

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY IN AND THROUGH EDUCATION

ACCESS

CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGIES

STEM

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Contributing to SDG Targets 4.1, 4.3, 4.5, 4.7

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

139 million boys
133 million girls
are
out of school

(UNESCO, 2025)

16% of countries **still don't guarantee** the **right to education** by law

(UNESCO, 2023)

By 2030, the global cost to governments of **girls and boys** dropping **out of school**

could reach

US$3 trillion

(UNESCO, 2024)

Women make up only

35% STEM graduates.

It has not changed in the past **10 years**

(UNESCO, 2024)

Women make up

57% of secondary **teachers**

45% in higher education **academic staff**

30% in higher education **leaders**

(UNESCO, 2025)

Between 2010-2023, **only 27%** of Education and Higher Education **Ministers** were **women**

(UNESCO, 2025)

STATE OF THE WORLD: A CRITICAL MOMENT FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

Thirty years after the Beijing Platform for Action established ambitious targets for girls' education, progress toward gender equality in education stands at a crossroads. While gains have been made in reaching gender parity in access to basic education globally, disparities between and within countries persist, with structural inequalities continuing to shape educational opportunities and outcomes – particularly among marginalized populations.

Girls in crisis and conflict-affected settings are more than twice as likely to be out of school as boys, and the gender gap becomes stark when looking beyond global averages. While global figures show 133 million girls and 139 million boys out of school,[1] the burden falls disproportionately on the world's most vulnerable girls. Across sub-Saharan Africa, rural girls from the poorest families face the steepest barriers: in Mali, Niger, and Tanzania, less than a quarter of girls reach upper secondary education.

Without sustained structural action to address persistent gender barriers and emerging challenges, the promise of quality education for all learners will remain unfulfilled.

The repercussions for individuals, families and societies are crippling. Indeed, in the ground-breaking report *The Price of Inaction*, published in 2024,[2] UNESCO, the OECD and the Commonwealth Secretariat estimated that if the world continues on its current path, **school dropouts and education gaps will cost the global economy $10 trillion a year by 2030**. The report reveals that countries cannot unlock their full economic potential without prioritizing investments in education and gender-transformative action.

Yet the challenges preventing equal participation in education are complex. One major challenge is the **global teacher shortage and gender disparities in the teaching profession itself**. UNESCO's 2024 *Global Report on Teachers*[3] revealed an urgent need for 44 million primary and secondary teachers worldwide by 2030, including 15 million new teachers in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is compounded by deep gender imbalances at different levels of the teaching profession – with low levels of male teachers in pre-primary education and an underrepresentation of women in higher education and school leadership positions. Without diverse educators and leaders at every level, learners lack the varied perspectives and role models essential for reaching their full potential.

When women lead schools, they are more likely to follow inclusive, empowering and collaborative practices and when women are politicians, they tend to prioritise decisions in support of education. This was confirmed in UNESCO's 2025 report *Women Lead for Learning*[4] that offers global data on the **multiple barriers faced by women to achieve equal representation in education leadership positions**, including school management or administration. The report indicates that obstacles are the result of entrenched stereotypes and biases, conscious and unconscious, as well as other institutional processes or professional development mechanisms that are insufficiently supportive of women's career progress.

© UNESCO/Bryan Cereijo

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, with schoolgirls and rangers from the Everglades National Park (United States), a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Gender norms and stereotypes also have adverse effects on education decisions for both girls and boys. Families may keep girls at home for household and caregiving responsibilities, while early marriage and unintended pregnancy may force them to cut short their educational journeys. This is particularly acute in conflict settings, where child marriage rates average 14.4 percentage points higher than in non-conflict countries. Despite global progress, as of 2025, 2 per cent of countries still explicitly restricted the right to education for married, pregnant, and parenting girls – institutionalizing exclusion when young women need support the most.[5] For boys, poverty and social expectations create a different trap – pushing them into early employment and away from education when families need immediate income. Gender-based violence and school bullying compounds these challenges, deterring both girls and boys from attending school.

The gender gap in STEM education represents a critical challenge for future workforce participation, with only 15 per cent of young women choosing STEM courses to study compared to 35 per cent of men.[6] This disparity has far-reaching consequences: women are underrepresented in STEM jobs globally, with similarly low representation in emerging fields like data and artificial intelligence (26 per cent), engineering (15 per cent) and cloud computing (12 per cent). The digital divide compounds these challenges, as 189 million more men than women were using the internet in 2024.[7] This systematic exclusion continues to limit individual opportunities and hinders broader social and economic progress, particularly as STEM careers become ever more relevant and increasingly crucial for innovation and sustainable development.

Young women are 8% more likely to be unemployed after graduation – rising to 30% in their 30s and 40s

Doubling the share of women in the tech workforce by 2027 could boost GDP by EUR 600 billion

Research reveals that academic performance doesn't explain this gap. A 2024 UNESCO study[8] found that girls often perform as well as or even better than boys in science during primary and secondary education yet are less likely to express interest in pursuing STEM studies further. Even more troubling, in 50 of 54[9] countries studied, girls are less likely to achieve top mathematics scores despite demonstrating equal or superior overall academic performance. This suggests that external factors, rather than ability, drive disparity.

If academic ability isn't the barrier, what is? The answer lies in pervasive societal messaging and gender stereotypes. **Girls receive signals from peers, parents, teachers and school counsellors suggesting that STEM subjects are better suited to boys.** UNESCO's 2025 publication *Red Teaming: Testing AI for Social Good*[10] revealed that AI large language models also perpetuate this bias when prompted to review the profiles of a man and a woman for a STEM-related job. These biases undermine girls' confidence in their abilities, leading to lower aspirations and reduced engagement in STEM fields despite their demonstrated competence.

Achieving gender equality in and through education requires coordinated action across multiple fronts, including implementing teaching practices that promote gender equality in schools, ensuring equitable digital access in underserved regions, and developing crisis-responsive educational frameworks that protect girls' learning opportunities. Success will be measured not just by enrolment numbers, but by creating sustainable pathways that allow all students to contribute their talents to solving humanity's most pressing challenges. For this reason, UNESCO promotes gender-transformative education, which refers to education that understands, recognizes and challenges the root causes of gender inequalities – including harmful gender norms and power imbalances. Without addressing the root causes of gender gaps in education, disparities will likely worsen, further entrenching economic inequality and limiting society's ability to harness its full intellectual potential.

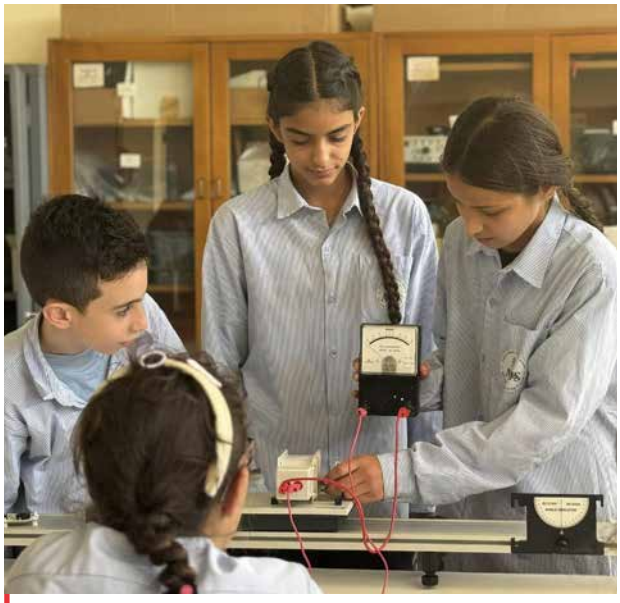
UNESCO PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

UNESCO is the lead United Nations agency responsible for coordinating the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Education 2030.

In the 2024-2025 biennium, and in line with the Organization's 2019-2025 strategy for gender equality in and through education, UNESCO supported the international education community to:

- introduce legal, policy and planning frameworks to ensure equal access to quality gender-transformative education;
- develop teaching and learning capacities to empower women and girls at the country level;
- promote gender-transformative curricula and pedagogies, with particular attention to STEM education.

An independent mid-term evaluation commissioned by UNESCO found that this strategy is highly relevant and well-aligned with global and national commitments, offering the possibility for stronger contextualization.



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Over 2,500 Lebanese students joined hands-on experiments in the UNESCO Green Demonstration Room, guided by trainers trained to integrate a gender perspective and avoid gender-related stereotypes.

Ensuring equal access to gender-transformative education and learning achievements

Addressing the challenge of access, UNESCO focused on the improvement of data collection and monitoring on gender-transformative education and learning. This work also considered how gender intersects with other factors of vulnerability such as conflict, disability, geographical isolation and low socio-economic status.

The Global Platform for Gender Equality in and through Education, a multi-stakeholder partnership emerging from the 2022 Transforming Education Summit and co-led by UNESCO, developed the *Global Accountability Dashboard*. The Dashboard provides a one stop resource that **monitors country progress against key indicators on gender-transformative education**. It also spotlights actions taken by governments and their partners, and provides an evidence hub of initiatives and good practices from 193 countries. Since its launch in November 2023, the Dashboard has been visited more than 4,000 times; it now provides comprehensive profiles of over 750 organizations working to promote gender equality in and through education and more than 1,100 transformative initiatives being implemented by governments, civil society and international agencies. The Dashboard is hosted on the *Evidence for Gender and Education Resource* website (EGER) and draws on rigorous data collected from different sources including UNESCO's *HerAtlas*.

Box 1

Strengthening the Integration of Gender Equality into Jordan's Education System

Under the System Strengthening Partnership with Jordan's Ministry of Education, UNESCO continues to support the transformation of Jordan's education system to ensure it is resilient, responsive to crises, and guided by strong governance and evidence-based planning.

As part of these efforts, UNESCO has supported the implementation of the national Gender Equality Action Plan 2023-2025. In 2024, a series of capacity-building workshops trained 216 education leaders on gender equality integration. In addition, the accredited training programme *Leading Change: Integrating Equity and Equality into Leadership Skills* was piloted for ministry staff, with the goal of institutionalizing gender-responsive leadership.

To further embed gender equality at all levels, a network of 73 gender focal points (49 per cent women) was strengthened across all 42 field directorates, enhancing coordination and monitoring of gender-responsive practices at the decentralized level.

Market women of Yopougon (Côte d'Ivoire) celebrate their success in obtaining the UNESCO Primary and Elementary Studies Certificate (CEPE).

© Dah, Ollo Yoann Marc-olivier

UNESCO has generated critical research including the report, *The Price of Inaction* (2024)[11] carried out in collaboration with the OECD and the Commonwealth Secretariat, providing evidence from 140 countries and detailed case studies from 20 countries. The report received significant media attention with over 200 articles in major outlets like Le Monde, the Financial Times, and Le Figaro. The results show that **girls and boys face distinct educational challenges requiring targeted interventions**: while girls are more likely to be out of school at the primary level and face greater barriers to accessing education, boys are at higher risk of grade repetition, failing to progress, and not learning effectively while in school.

The report emphasizes that gender-transformative education requires addressing these differential patterns through inclusive learning environments that challenge gender biases and stereotypes, while ensuring all children have equal opportunities to learn and thrive. UNESCO is translating the report's findings into meaningful country-level action: for example, in June 2025, the Senegalese Ministry of National Education with the support of the UNESCO and its International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO-IIEP) held a national workshop to encourage ownership of the Senegal-specific findings from the global report and ensure their integration into public policy. Similar consultations were also held in Peru and are planned for Bangladesh and Sudan.

Shining a light on both global and disaggregated inequalities is made possible through UNESCO's *World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE)*. It plays a pivotal role in advancing the global agenda for gender equality in education by providing a robust, data-driven foundation for policy and advocacy.

Drawing on quantitative data from over 160 countries – including Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), national household surveys, and international learning assessments – *WIDE* enables detailed comparisons of educational participation and achievement across gender, wealth, location, and ethnicity. This comprehensive approach helps illuminate persistent gender disparities in access, completion, and learning outcomes. It is an essential tool for tracking progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 4.5, which targets the elimination of gender disparities in education. By making inequality visible through interactive visualizations and disaggregated data, *WIDE* **empowers governments, researchers, and civil society to monitor the effectiveness of gender-focused interventions**.

Through evidence-based monitoring and research, UNESCO and its specialized institutes have developed **strategic, multi-sector interventions to address critical educational challenges**. For example, UNESCO's *Lifting Barriers: Educated boys for gender equality* project, implemented in partnership with Equimundo and the University of East Anglia, investigates how harmful masculine gender norms impact boys' educational motivation. Through research and practice, the project identifies conditions that facilitate successful implementation and scaling-up of strategies in Cambodia, Lesotho and Malawi integrating boys' needs into policy, revising curricula, and providing training to counter boys' disengagement from education and promote gender equality. As the project progresses towards completion in March 2027, it continues developing practical approaches to strengthen education systems to be more gender-transformative, efficient, safe, and inclusive.

Each additional year of secondary education can reduce the risk for girls of marrying as a child and having a child before 18

The *Better Lives for Out-of-School Girls* initiative supports young women in the Philippines to complete their basic education through the development and roll-out of non-formal alternative learning system. In 2024, 940 teachers (520 female) and 800 girls and young women have received basic education and been trained on life skills.

Box 2

Transforming Lives: UNESCO Champions Educational Equality for Girls across Africa

In 2024, UNESCO raised the visibility of two groundbreaking initiatives that are reshaping educational opportunities for girls in sub-Saharan Africa through its annual *Prize for Girls' and Women's Education.*

Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) in Uganda has created the "Empowering schools for adolescent girls" initiative. By establishing gender-responsive infrastructure that prioritizes girls' health, safety, and dignity, combined with evidence-based teacher training, *PEAS* has built environments where girls from rural regions can thrive. Their holistic approach includes life skills training and girls' clubs, creating a supportive ecosystem that now impacts nearly 300,000 students annually across Uganda, Ghana, and Zambia.

The *Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED)* has revolutionized secondary education completion in Zambia through comprehensive support systems. Their three-pronged strategy addresses vulnerability through financial and social assistance, facilitates transition to meaningful employment, and partners with government to embed these innovations into national policy. Since 2001, *CAMFED* Zambia has supported over 617,000 girls and young women, creating pathways from education to community leadership.

PEAS in Uganda won the 2024 UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education for creating safe, gender-responsive schools that support rural adolescent girls.

© UNESCO/PEAS

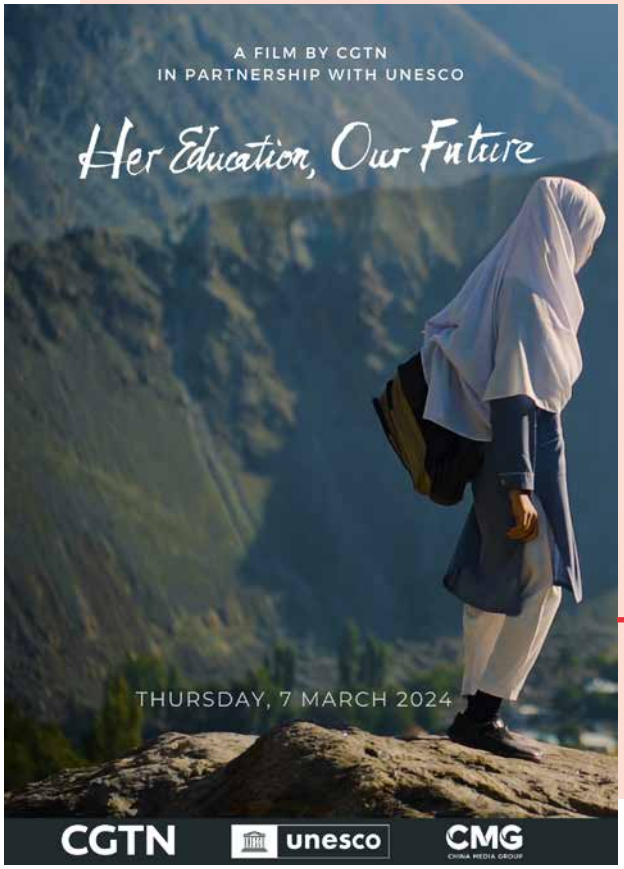
This initiative contributes not only to improving the quality of life of some of the most marginalized girls – including those who are married or living in poverty – but also plays an important role in shifting community attitudes to gender equality.

UNESCO also spearheaded **global and country-level initiatives to directly support and raise awareness of the importance of girls' and women's access to education**. *UNESCO's Prize for Girls' and Women's Education*, funded by the Government of the People's Republic of China, directly supports cutting-edge grassroots efforts supporting girls to pursue education in the field of their choice. Since the Prize's launch in 2016, grants totaling US$1 million have been awarded. The transformative power of education for girls was highlighted for the general public through the production and dissemination of a 50-minute documentary film, *Her Education Our Future*, highlighting UNESCO's work in this area. UNESCO's global advocacy campaign *Girls Back to School* was rolled out in communities throughout Senegal.

Box 3

Her Education, Our Future: Documentary Film on How Education Transformed the Lives of Girls in Brazil, Pakistan and Tanzania

The documentary film *Her Education, Our Future*, produced by the Chinese CGTN network in partnership with UNESCO, highlights the transformative power of education for girls. It tells the stories of four girls from Brazil, Pakistan and Tanzania whose lives were changed through education.



© CGTN

Mkasi from Tanzania, as well as Fabiana and Tainá from Brazil benefited from UNESCO programmes, which provided them with access to education, enhanced their skills for life and work, and expanded their learning and career opportunities.

Anee from Pakistan had to drop out of school because her parents couldn't afford her education and her father didn't believe in educating girls. Through UNESCO's *Girls' Right to Education* programme, Anee's family received support to overcome financial barriers, and she was re-enrolled in school. Anee dreams of becoming a doctor.

UNESCO's efforts have supported almost 60,000 girls in Pakistan alone, helping them to enroll and continue their education. The film underscores that girls' education is not only a matter of human rights but also a smart investment for society's overall prosperity.

UNESCO's documentary Her Education, Our Future follows Anee, Fabiana, Mkasi, and Tainá across three continents, highlighting how supporting girls through education transforms their lives, families, and communities.

> ***"The most important thing is access to education… If girls receive effective support during adolescence, they have the potential to change the world.***
>
> ***Isabel Plant***
>
> *Chilean journalist and one of the founders of Mujeres Bacanas*

Promoting gender-transformative teaching, content and healthy learning environments

UNESCO continued to support countries to reduce gender bias and stereotypes in their curricula, learning materials and learning environments – reaching over 27 million learners with quality gender-transformative education during the 2024-2025 biennium. It also worked with 44 countries across all regions to develop and/or strengthen teacher-related policies, frameworks, and monitoring systems. In 2024, UNESCO sounded the alarm on the **global shortage of teachers**, a crisis that will leave the next generation of learners without teachers in classrooms.

Moreover, although evidence shows that both men and women teachers can help learners develop healthier, less stereotyped attitudes to gender, teacher shortages are compounded by stark gender imbalances: women are overrepresented in the profession – particularly at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels – yet they remain significantly underrepresented in leadership positions. Based on the findings of its 2024 *Global Report on Teachers*, UNESCO launched the *#TeachersMissing* advocacy campaign with the Teacher Task Force for Education at the Transforming Education Summit (TES) stock-taking meeting held in June 2024 at UNESCO headquarters. It culminated in a Call to Action adopted during the Global Education Meeting in November 2024, that reaffirms education as a global public good and calls on governments to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession, by improving their working conditions and environment – including through addressing the gendered barriers to teachers' career opportunities and progression.

UNESCO is working with the *Global Partnership for Education* to address this crisis by **investing in quality teachers and teaching**. Particular focus is placed on building capacities among teachers and other educational staff to recognize and address gender biases and stereotypes, create inclusive learning environments, and implement gender-transformative teaching methods. Contextualized training was delivered to education officials and decision-makers on integrating gender considerations into education planning. Additional country-specific activities, such as the development of a teacher training manual on gender-responsive pedagogies and gender-responsive sector analysis, complemented the training and facilitated further capacity building.

Building healthy learning environments remains a priority for UNESCO and its partners by producing and disseminating age-appropriate technical guides and tools on quality comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), including through digital tools, supporting the training of teachers, and intervening at the country level. The flagship *Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3)* programme provides access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and sexual and reproductive health services (SRHR) in sub-Saharan Africa to reduce new HIV infections, early and unintended pregnancy and child marriage. In Mozambique, for instance, 116,800 students, including 56,589 girls, received training on health and well-being and quality comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). The ongoing review of integrating CSE into upper secondary education aims to provide continued guidance and protection for young people, particularly girls.

© DR. Dalea Bean

UNESCO trained 20 education leaders from the Bahamas, Belize, the British Virgin Islands, Guyana, and Jamaica to integrate gender equality into education policies and curricula.

Box 4

Transforming Teaching Across the Caribbean

While great strides have been made to address gender equality in and through education across the Caribbean region, countries remain plagued by issues such as high rates of school-based gender-based violence and persisting harmful gender norms that hinder perceptions and aspirations of both girls and boys, with the latter more likely to disengage from education and be left behind particularly at the upper secondary level.

Gender mainstreaming in education policies, national curricula and teacher education and training programmes remains a work in progress as research across five Caribbean countries has shown. This research, commissioned by UNESCO, further indicates that global citizenship education priorities including gender equality are only loosely integrated across the curriculum and there is an overall knowledge gap on gender issues among the teachers, signaling the need for urgent action.

Based on these results, a capacity-building workshop was organized in Jamaica for educators to finds ways to better integrate gender equality into teaching practices and strengthen teacher awareness of gender issues. It focused on equipping teachers with the means to challenge harmful stereotypes, aiming to foster more inclusive and equitable learning environments throughout the region.

In July 2025 UNESCO also promoted gender-transformative education by supporting the development of a regional teacher training module.

Box 5

AI to Advance Health and Well-being Education in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe

Through the *Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3)* programme, UNESCO is supporting the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools to improve health and well-being education in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The initiative supports teachers and learners with inclusive, gender-responsive education on comprehensive sexuality education, using accessible technologies to reach adolescents.

The programme features a suite of digital tools co-developed with the Ministries of Education to ensure relevance and sustainability. These include an AI-powered scripted lesson planner, which enables teachers to generate tailored lesson plans aligned with national curricula and pedagogical frameworks; WhatsApp-based chatbots, which provide students with pre-exam preparation and gender-transformative health and sexuality education content; and a regional digital community of practice, which fosters professional development through peer learning, coaching, and resource sharing.

The platform is free to use and has been growing organically since its launch in 2024, with over 3,000 registered users to date. Through familiar, low-bandwidth technologies, the initiative equips both teachers and students to challenge harmful gender norms and promote positive health and well-being.

Providing access for girls and women to education opportunities in STEM

Women make up only 35 per cent of STEM graduates, a figure unchanged in ten years, and hold just one quarter of science, engineering and ICT jobs. In 2024, in response to these persistent disparities and building on evidence collected by UNESCO over the last eight years, the *Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report – Technology on Her Terms* called for the development of gender-responsive curricula and teacher training to challenge stereotypes, the inclusion of diverse stakeholders in shaping education technology policies, and investment in programmes that empower girls and young women to pursue STEM education and careers.

UNESCO's partnership with Huawei supported STEM curriculum reforms that benefited 327 educators in 13 East African countries, enhancing their capacity to deliver gender-focused STEM education. It also led to progress across five countries in South-East Europe and the Mediterranean to **equip next generations with STEM competencies, with a particular emphasis on empowering girls and women**. Aligned with the 2030 SDG Agenda, the initiative engaged 3,200 students, 3,600 educators, and 243 schools. Projects fostered innovation, international collaboration, and best practice sharing while building national capacity through 13 ministries and reaching 6,000 stakeholders through advocacy efforts.

In Tajikistan, as part of a major project funded by the European Union, a thorough gender analysis and revision of STEM textbooks has been undertaken, with specific attention paid to identifying gender stereotypes and biases. The findings informed a national workshop, which gathered education professionals and STEM experts to support the **development of new gender-responsive competency-based textbooks on STEM**. In parallel, sessions on gender-responsive pedagogies were organized for teachers.

© Hermann Oberth International School – ASPnet Member UNESCO Romania

UNESCO Gender and STEM Education project in Romania funded by the Huawei partnership

Underrepresentation of women in STEM is particularly pronounced in Africa, where women make up as few as 25 per cent of STEM graduates in some countries, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data. In November 2024, a landmark Continental STEM Conference was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, organized by UNESCO and the African Union Commission, aimed to **build a transformative STEM ecosystem for Africa**. Over 600 stakeholders, from over 50 countries, discussed inclusive STEM ecosystems, financing strategies, and gender-focused education, reinforcing STEM's role in achieving Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. The event specifically called for actions to address the root causes of gender gaps, stereotypes, and biases; and fostering an inclusive and equitable STEM ecosystem. Partners endorsed the key commitments outlined in the Addis Ababa Communiqué, focusing on areas such as expanding early STEM exposure, reforming curricula, and training teachers in gender-responsive methods. UNESCO is supporting action plan development, resource mobilization, and country-level implementation in line with the Communiqué.

Overall, in 2024 UNESCO supported 25 Member States in **advancing gender-equitable STEM education through policy and planning**, particularly in Africa. For example, in the framework of the UNESCO-China Funds-in-Trust (CFIT) Project (2021-2025), which aims to enhance the capacity of higher education institutions to respond to the skill needs for national development, a focus has been put in addressing the gender gap in STEM education by promoting women's leadership and implementing gender-sensitive policies in up to 12 partner universities. In addition, data collection for a national strategy was supported in Burundi and technical and financial support was provided towards the development of a national STEM policy in Kenya. To encourage girls' engagement in science, UNESCO also worked with the Malian National Commission for UNESCO supporting the national "Miss Science" competition to encourage girls' engagement in science. Since its launch in 2018, five editions have reached all 26 education academies of Mali, with the participation of 840 girls.

Box 6

#EDUCASTEM2030 Brazil

Led by UNESCO, the *#EDUCASTEM2030* project is a strategic initiative to promote the inclusion of girls and women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education in Brazil. *#EDUCASTEM2030* implemented various activities aimed at inspiring and empowering girls and women with the skills, confidence, and support needed to pursue careers in STEM fields.

By highlighting women scientists and inspiring figures in STEM fields, the project reached and engaged over 8,900 students, teachers, and school administrators through various modalities, such as the STEM Teacher Leader and STEM Young Leader courses. It resulted in a new partnership with the University of Brasília – a shift that ensured greater alignment with national educational policies.

> ***"During the classes, I realized that I also had the right to choose what I wanted to be. They showed us several examples of women who became scientists… and I want to be one of them too.***
>
> *Student of the STEM Young Leader programme*
> *Maceió, Brazil*

Feedback from participants point to increased interest and confidence among girls in pursuing academic and professional paths in STEM. All these results demonstrate the impact of this long-term initiative launched in 2022 as a catalyst for systemic change in STEM education for girls and women in Brazil.

Engineering student Letícia Alves, from the #EDUCASTEM2030 project, Bahia, Brazil.

© UNESCO/Shirley Costa

2024-2025 IN REVIEW – FROM COMMITMENT TO IMPACT

UNESCO lays the groundwork so that every policy reform, data point and classroom innovation converges to ensure all learners thrive in inclusive, equitable and safe educational environments.

Results for 2024-2025 demonstrate that UNESCO's initiatives delivered tangible and impressive global results, reaffirming its position as a global and local thought leader on gender equality in and through education. It has strengthened legal frameworks and enhanced education systems with a clear focus on ensuring equal access, participation, and achievement for all learners. Data collection mechanisms have been significantly reinforced, notably through the *Global Accountability Dashboard* and the *World Inequality Database on Education* (WIDE), hosted by UNESCO. These, together with the Organization's groundbreaking research and publications, have shone a light on gender disparities and specific barriers to learning faced by girls and boys that have galvanized targeted interventions around the world.

UNESCO'S 2024-2025 MONITORING DATA

- **27 million learners** (13.5 million women) supported to have access to **quality gender-transformative education**
- **10 countries** (9 in Africa, 1 SIDS) have improved laws, policies, plans or monitoring systems **to advance gender equality in and through education**
- **19 countries** (7 in Africa) have widened access to **quality, equitable, gender-responsive higher education**
- **27,060,523 learners** (13,541,485 women) accessed **life skills-based HIV and sexuality education**
- **89 countries** (54 in Africa, 20 SIDS) have reviewed their national **STEM education systems**, with attention to gender
- **17 countries** have advanced quality, equitable, inclusive and gender-transformative **STEM education** and **8 countries** (5 in Africa) have launched **new policies or plans**.
- **10 million** people were reached with advocacy messaging on the **importance of girls' education**

Results extracted from selected gender-related indicators of UNESCO Programme and Budget 2024-2025 and project data linked to Strategic Objective 1.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

2

EMPOWER WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

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SONY

Girls around the world must be encouraged to explore the countless opportunities that science provides – many of which they might not yet even imagine, but all of which will empower them to shape a better future for all.

Audrey Azoulay
Director-General of UNESCO

UNESCO works to promote opportunities for women and girls pursuing scientific careers, especially with a view to protecting the environment. It provides role models and mentors for young women scientists and advocates to empower them to contribute their knowledge on the sustainable use of natural resources and heritage. UNESCO also supports gender-responsive environmental action with a focus on biodiversity, water and oceans.

Work towards sustainable societies by preserving the environment through the promotion of science, technology and the natural heritage

EMPOWER WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP

ECOSYSTEMS & BIODIVERSITY

WATER & OCEANS

5 GENDER EQUALITY

Contributing to SDG Target 5.5

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

By 2050, climate breakdown could push 236 million more women and girls into hunger

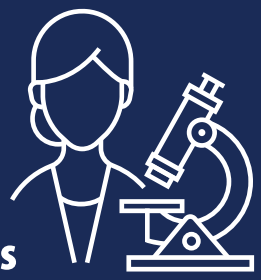
(UN Women & UN DESA, 2024)

Just 3.5% of climate aid prioritised gender equality in 2022–2023

(OECD, 2024)

At the 2024 Climate Change Conference COP29 women made up just 1 in 10 world leaders

(Care, 2024)



1 in 2 women researchers have faced sexual harassment during their careers

(UNESCO, 2024)

Only 27% of countries meet gender goals in their water management plans

(UNEP DHI, 2025)

Women hold

22% of STEM jobs in the G20 countries

14% of STEM jobs in the African Union countries

(UNESCO, 2024)

Only 2% of seafarers are women mostly in cruise jobs

(UNESCO, 2024)

STATE OF THE WORLD: WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REMAINS CRITICAL FOR ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The intensifying global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and air, land and water pollution continue to disrupt our planet's natural systems at an alarming pace with equally important impacts for women and girls. As Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights powerfully stated: "Women's leadership as agents of change to address the climate crisis is the only way for us to save the planet before it's too late". These words become even more urgent in the face of estimates that by 2050, climate change is projected to push an additional 158,3 million women and girls into poverty and 236 million more into hunger.[1]

A fundamental imbalance persists at the heart of our scientific and technological workforce, despite incremental progress in the share of women researchers across certain disciplines and regions over the past ten years. While women represent only around one third of the scientific community globally, parity has been reached in Central Asia and in the Latin American and Caribbean regions. Disparities persist across the public and private sectors, with men continuing to dominate in the private sector globally. This phenomenon becomes even more striking as women progress in their careers, with a persistent "drop to the top" phenomenon resulting in women holding barely one-tenth of leadership positions in STEM. [2]

As the lead agency for the UN Ocean Decade (2021-2030), UNESCO observes **similar patterns of under-representation – not only among women ocean scientists, but also among women working across ocean-related professions**: women account for 38 per cent of ocean researchers and 37 per cent of all ocean science personnel. Moreover, women often occupy less secure positions in coastal and maritime tourism and fisheries, limiting their influence despite their direct stake in ocean health and sustainability. The differentiated gender roles and knowledge systems related to biodiversity within communities – and especially among Indigenous women – also represent an untapped resource. In the face of ocean warming, acidification, pollution, sea level rise and overfishing, bridging the gender gap, understanding the gender-specific impacts, and building on women's daily interactions with the ocean are essential for developing effective and equitable policies and solutions.

Despite the increasing **relevance of gender in the governance and management of water resources**, UNESCO's data reveals that women constitute less than 17 per cent of the total paid workforce,[3] with even fewer in decision-making positions or key scientific positions. For example, in the 21 leading hydrology journals, women occupied on average 18 per cent of editorial board seats.[4]

Women remain largely under-represented in global climate leadership and financing – among the 78 world leaders who participated in COP29, women represented just over 10 per cent,[5] a small increase from 6 per cent at COP27. In terms of financing, only 3,5 per cent of all official development assistance in 2022-2023 for climate action included gender equality as a principal objective.[6]

In **86%** of the countries where data is available, women make up less than **45%** of researchers in the private sector

78% of women surveyed have experienced sexual harassment in the marine science workplace or learning environment, and 39% of them did not report the incident

Breaking the cycle of exclusion is only a first step, as **women scientists continue to face gender-based discrimination and violence**. In 2024, 1 in 2 women scientific researchers reported experiencing sexual harassment during their careers.[7]

According to UNESCO's publication *The Safety of Scientific Researchers* (2024), "attacks, harassment, or violence against women may affect their performance and productivity and may even lead them to abandon their research activities all together".[8] This persistent disparity represents more than a failure of equality – it constitutes a critical limitation on scientific progress, constrains sustainable development, and undermines efforts to build peaceful and sustainable societies.

Progress will involve harnessing the diversity of women's experiences and backgrounds, especially indigenous women whose traditional ecological knowledge and practices offer promising avenues when combined with contemporary technological approaches. The gender imbalance in science is not merely a women's issue but a fundamental limitation to humanity's capacity to innovate and respond effectively to our most pressing global challenges.

Laureates of the 27th L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Awards – Prof. Maria Teresa Dova, Prof. Barbara Finlayson-Pitts, Prof. Priscilla Baker, and Prof. Claudia Felser – with Audrey Azoulay (UNESCO Director-General) and Jean-Paul Agon (President of the Fondation L'Oréal).

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UNESCO PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

UNESCO plays a strategic role in catalysing dialogue, building capacities, and amplifying the voices of women scientists and environmental changemakers to promote open and inclusive science – by all and for all. By elevating women leadership and expanding women's presence in scientific domains, UNESCO works towards achieving gender equality in science and technology, while fostering innovative environmental responses to tackle escalating global threats. Key action areas are to:

- Advance the careers of women in leadership and decision-making positions in science;
- Ensure that women and girls lead actions to preserve and protect ecosystems and biodiversity;
- Address gender inequalities in the fields of water and the ocean.

In 2024-2025, UNESCO's commitment to addressing the stereotypes that hinder women's representation in scientific and tech roles and advancing their careers has yielded significant results, as evidenced by new knowledge and global guidelines to guide policy transformation, and expanded impactful programmes and strategic partnerships.

Advancing the careers and leadership of women in science

The launch of the **UNESCO Call to Action *Closing the Gender Gap in Science* in 2024 is a crucial milestone to address persistent gender gaps in scientific fields**. Informed by diverse stakeholders, from international bodies to academia and both public and private sectors, it identifies key challenges and provides recommendations aimed at tackling the root causes of gender-based inequalities in science.

The Call provides a comprehensive, holistic approach built around three pillars: dismantling gender stereotypes and biases in science through the enhanced visibility of female role models; opening educational pathways for girls in science through innovative and inspiring educational strategies and initiatives; and changing workplace environments to attract, retain and advance women scientists through policies and actions that promote inclusion, diversity and equity.

In addition, UNESCO launched the Call to Action on the *Freedom of Scientists and Scientific Freedom* in 2024 for Member States to recognise the **specific safety and health challenges and vulnerabilities faced by women scientists** and address challenges to their career progression.

Within its first year, the Call to Action *Closing the Gender Gap in Science* brought together a strong and growing community of experts in gender and science from around the world. It generated a global dialogue through its three Action Groups for Women in Science – each aligned with the Call to Action's pillars and through the LinkedIn group "UNESCO – Advancing Gender Equality in Science".

The Call to Action culminated in the **worldwide campaign *Imagine a world with more women in science*** *#EveryVoiceInScience* for the 2025 International Day of Women and Girls in Science. The campaign invited the world to reflect on the question: what would be different in your field if more women were involved in science? Within just two weeks, nearly 900 posts were shared by the members of this network, reaching an estimated 26 million people across social media.

© Todd Antony

"The mountain challenges you, but it never discriminates." Lita Gonzáles, member of the Cholita climbers, during the event "Higher than Fear", at UNESCO Headquarters in 2025.

Alongside the campaign, a new digital platform was launched in 2025 – the *UNESCO Inclusive and Open Science Hub* – to showcase good practices from stakeholders and facilitate knowledge sharing in creating more gender-responsive scientific ecosystems. In addition, UNESCO pursued its efforts to produce **new data and knowledge to draw international attention to the persistent gender gaps** and advocated for evidence-based policy reforms. In this regard, the policy brief *Changing the Equation: Securing STEM futures for women*, published for the G20 Women's Empowerment Working Group in 2024 provides a comprehensive analysis of both the barriers women face – such as pay gaps, limited advancement opportunities, and workplace discrimination – and the effectiveness of targeted interventions across G20 nations. Its recommendations, which include fostering inclusive environments, supporting mentorship programmes, and setting gender targets, encourage governments, institutions, and organisations to implement strategies that increase women's aspiration, retention, and advancement in STEM.

Significant progress has also been made during this biennium to **incorporate gender equality considerations into science policy frameworks**. UNESCO notably implemented up to 10 capacity building initiatives on gender-transformative Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) strategies and actively supported six countries to develop inclusive STI policies that address systemic gender inequalities.

Moreover, 91 countries now have STI research and development data disaggregated by gender that is made available in the UNESCO Institute for Statistics database to foster informed policy-making. At the global level, in 2024, the *G20 Recommendation on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Science Technology and Innovation* reinforced commitments to open science and gender equality. It explicitly called for the implementation of UNESCO's Call to Action *Closing the Gender Gap in Science*. These efforts helped to strengthen institutional frameworks that support women's participation and leadership in science.

At the operational level, UNESCO has provided **research training and networking opportunities for women scientists at different stages of their careers**, notably from the Global South. For over three decades, the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) has been a cornerstone of UNESCO's strategy to advance the careers of women in science and technology. In 2024, the *OWSD Early Career Fellowships* were awarded to 15 women scientists, each receiving up to USD 50,000 to lead research projects and create research groups across 13 developing countries. The 2024 fellows are engaged in a broad spectrum of research initiatives – from developing antivenom for snakebites in Nepal, to safeguarding oak forests in Guatemala, to applying artificial intelligence to assess vulnerabilities in Tanzania's health and energy infrastructures.

> **For Women in Science** ***boosted my professional standing by enhancing my reputation and confidence in the scientific community. It also validated the importance and impact of my research and made me more eligible for further research grants from different funding bodies. Since receiving the Award, I have been most proud of pioneering an AI and robotics lab at the University of Lagos.***

Dr. Chika Ogochukwu Yinka Banjo

2013 Laureate of the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Young Talents, *for Sub-Saharan Africa commenting on the impact of the Award on her career.*

In addition to financial support, fellows benefited from an orientation workshop that combined practical training on grant management with sessions on broader topics, such as science communication or science diplomacy, helping them to grow within and beyond the lab.

The annual *OWSD-Elsevier Foundation Awards for Early Career Women Scientists in the Developing World* is another opportunity to reward and encourage outstanding women with a STEM PhD. In 2024-2025, ten women scientists received this award.

Raising the profile of emerging and outstanding women scientists not only brings them into the spotlight but also draws attention to their research and innovations while showcasing inspiring role models for younger scientists. For over 27 years, the L'Oréal–UNESCO *For Women in Science* programme has supported over 4,700 women scientists, with seven laureates becoming Nobel Prize winners. The 2024 and 2025 editions of the International Award recognised exceptional women in Life Sciences (2024) and Physical Sciences, Mathematics & Computer Science (2025), with each of the laureates – selected from more than 450 nominees for each edition – receiving 100,000 euros.

Box 1

Breaking Gender Barriers in STEM in South-East Europe and the Mediterranean

Despite comprising only 35 per cent graduates globally,[9] women continue to face persistent barriers in STEM. On the International Day for Women and Girls in Science, UNESCO convened four pioneering women scientists – Chiara Biscarini, Erika Kereskényi, Florentina Neatu and Thomais Vlachogianni – to share their transformative journeys facing various obstacles from deeply rooted gender stereotypes and how this has an impact on hiring practices and promotions.

Their testimonies underscored a critical truth: advancing gender equality in STEM demands collective effort. By sharing their stories, they are inspiring the next generation to break barriers and build confidence among women in the scientific community.

Dr. Thomais Vlachogianni, environmental chemist and ecotoxicologist working in the field

© Thomais Vlachogianni

By providing financial support and global visibility, the programme not only breaks down barriers for individual scientists but also inspires future generations to pursue STEM careers.

The L'Oréal-UNESCO *For Women in Science Young Talents* programmes follow a similar approach, by **providing critical financial support and professional development opportunities at a pivotal career stage**. The 50 national and regional programmes have expanded their reach to support emerging scientists across more than 140 countries and territories. In 2024, the *Sub-Saharan Africa Young Talents* Programme recognised Happyness Ngonyani from Tanzania for her innovative work on ensuring equal and sustainable access to water for river basin stakeholders in Tanzania and neighbouring Kenya. In the Caribbean, two scientists, Dr. Savanna Lloyd and PhD candidate Gillian A. Rowe were celebrated for their achievements in physics and agricultural sciences, respectively.

The successful collaboration with the Fondation L'Oréal is set to intensify in the future with the global rollout of the *For Girls in Science* programme. The initiative aims to dismantle gender stereotypes associated with science and inspire young girls by engaging a network of inspiring women scientists as role models. By 2030, the programme is expected to reach nearly 5 million students and their teachers across more than 10,000 UNESCO Associated Schools around the world – another important step toward building the next generation of scientists.

Another way to support women's careers in science is by helping them build strong support networks. Therefore, UNESCO actively created **platforms for women scientists to share their expertise and to influence scientific discourse**. In 2025, the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science was marked by the event *Unpacking STEM Careers: Her voice in science*, which emphasized the many opportunities a STEM education can provide and highlighted the importance of diversity and inclusion in science. On this occasion, a new partnership with Radio-Télévision Belge Francophone (RTBF) was launched. Together, UNESCO and RTBF are developing a media coaching initiative for women in science, designed to help women scientists gain confidence and visibility in the media, and to promote more inclusive science communication.

Box 2

Arab Women in Science Platform

Women in science across the Arab Region continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions and face several structural barriers. In response, UNESCO partnered with the Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport (AASTMT) to launch a new Arab Women in Science Platform.

The platform was the result of two years of consultations with 169 women scientists across the region, including interviews, surveys, and focus sessions spanning four generations. It offers women scientists a dedicated space to connect, to access potential mentors, coaching and training opportunities, and to collectively tackle gender biases in science.

With a community of now 240 Arab women scientists and a network of 21 researchers who co-designed the platform, it serves to strengthen women's leadership and mentorship in science and advocates for gender-responsive policies.

© UNESCO

Participants of the UNESCO Arab Women in Science Platform take part in "Testing the Platform: Consultation Sessions with Practitioners" in Cairo.

Ensuring that women and girls lead action to preserve and protect ecosystems and biodiversity

UNESCO's programmes have increasingly recognised and empowered women as key actors in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management. UNESCO's approach includes strengthening women's resilience against climate impacts, recognising their role as environmental change agents, and integrating indigenous women's knowledge into ecosystem management systems. These strategies have yielded significant results across UNESCO's designated sites and programmes throughout 2024-2025.

UNESCO's Biosphere Reserves and natural sites have become vibrant laboratories for women's leadership in environmental stewardship, where innovative solutions to ecological challenges emerge from women-led initiatives. Two of UNESCO's flagship programmes – the *Man and the Biosphere Programme* (MAB) and the *Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems Programme* (LINKS) – play an instrumental role in recognising and mainstreaming women's unique contributions, particularly those from Indigenous communities, in ecosystems restoration and biodiversity protection. In 2024, 120 countries were empowered to implement sustainability science research programmes in Biosphere Reserves and natural sites. Over 2,600 participants engaged in these programmes, with women representing 43 per cent of the total. For example, in Chile, the Biosphere Reserves Youth Network created a dynamic platform for young women environmentalists to shape conservation planning and implementation. In Madagascar, the *Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management for Integrated Community Development in National Parks* (BIOCOM) project supported women's journeys from participants to leaders in environmental governance. Through comprehensive capacity building, women have acquired skills in sustainable resource management and now occupy leadership roles in local environmental decision-making structures. The *Women for Bees* programme, developed in collaboration with Guerlain, provides women with expertise in beekeeping and biodiversity conservation, while supporting sustainable livelihoods.

In 2025, the programme was expanded to China's Xishuangbanna Biosphere Reserve, where 45 women beekeepers began a 9-month training to acquire skills in sustainable beekeeping techniques, and received support in packaging and selling their honey, exemplifying how environmental conservation can simultaneously advance women's economic empowerment.

UNESCO's recognition that **Indigenous women possess invaluable ecological knowledge essential for sustainable development** has shaped transformative programmes across the globe. In 2024, 21 gender-responsive scientific assessments were conducted and 6 Global networks were supported to facilitate local and Indigenous knowledge transmission by women. The *Amazonía, Educación y Desarrollo Sostenible* (Amazon, Education and Sustainable Development) project stands as a testament to this approach. By producing resources that address both gender-based violence and environmental management, the project demonstrates UNESCO's commitment to holistic sustainability that encompasses both environmental and social dimensions. Funded by LVMH, the *Amazon Project* has also integrated gender considerations into its core framework – an essential prerequisite to reduce biodiversity loss in the Amazon basin.

Efforts to **foster the emergence of a new generation of women environmentalists** are bearing fruits. The UNESCO and Nestlé pilot Global Youth Grant Scheme *Because Youth Matter*, was launched in 2023 to provide young people with the resources and skills to develop innovative environmental solutions. Out of more than 900 applications, 20 projects with the highest positive social impact were selected, which together have improved the lives of more than 130,000 community members across the region. Young women have led groundbreaking projects such as Ángeles Marcial Mejía's *Earth-IoT: Conectando el campo* (Connecting the countryside) initiative, which harnesses technology to support sustainable agriculture across rural communities in Mexico. Similarly, Aisha Al Maadeed's *Greener Future* initiative in Qatar, evolved from addressing plastic pollution to promoting comprehensive environmental stewardship.

Box 3

Gender-Responsive Climate Education in Central Asia

UNESCO has empowered young women to visualise the intersection of gender and climate change through art in Central Asia. As part of a wider collaboration with CAPS Unlock, the initiative inspired 800 young people aged 7-20 across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to participate in a drawing competition.

From 1,040 submissions, 20 finalist artworks were selected to create an educational manual designed to help educators raise awareness about the gender dimensions of climate change. It highlights the intersection of gender and climate vulnerability, offering practical approaches for engaging children and youth in reflection.

In September 2025, UNESCO hosted an exhibition of these artworks in Almaty to further amplify these urgent messages from young women across the region about the gendered impacts of climate change. The exhibition also raised awareness about the importance of incorporating the perspectives of women and girls in climate change education.

© UNESCO/Danel Duisekova

One of the 20 finalist artworks selected from 1,040 submissions, created by Danel Duisekova, illustrating the intersection of gender and climate change.

> *Learning how to use finite resources wisely, adapting to environmental transformations, and questioning the limits of what a woman can do single-handed, will be my daily challenge and the challenge of our whole generation.*
>
> *Tamara Klink*
>
> *Report on her journey to the Arctic*

Traditional barriers in environmental fieldwork are crumbling as women claim their rightful place in challenging scientific domains. In Kazakhstan, the *Adventure of Science* programme has shattered the myth that glaciological fieldwork is "too hard" for women. The programme has increased women's participation in this field across all Central Asian countries, with many advancing to instructor positions and mentoring the next generation of women scientists. Along the same lines, Tamara Klink's UNESCO-supported journey to the Arctic exemplifies how individual actions can raise global awareness about climate change while breaking gender stereotypes. By amplifying young women's voices in environmental advocacy, UNESCO showcases their powerful contributions to climate crisis awareness.

By **recognising women not merely as beneficiaries but as leaders, innovators, and knowledge holders**, UNESCO has created pathways for more effective and sustainable environmental management. The initiatives described here represent not just programmes but a fundamental shift in understanding who leads environmental action and how diverse perspectives strengthen conservation outcomes.

Indeed, the ripple effects of women's environmental leadership extend from community initiatives to international policy influence and are aligned with UNESCO's strategy to strengthen Member States' capacities to enhance resilience and address challenges faced by women and girls regarding natural hazards and climate change.

In 2024, 20 countries made progress in applying UNESCO's methodology for resilience building. Significant support was also provided to SIDS, with ten of them empowered through gender-responsive initiatives aimed at building resilience in fields such as ecosystem and biodiversity conservation and restoration, climate change, disaster-risk reduction or water governance and management.

Box 4

A Call for Women in Science, Not in Silence

For the International Day of Women in Multilateralism 2024, UNESCO brought together leaders, experts, and activists from around the world to ensure that gender equality is at the centre of multilateral responses to climate crises. This global dialogue produced a Call to Action to advance the multilateral agenda for gender equality and climate justice.

The recommendations focus on enhancing women's leadership, increasing investments in gender-responsive climate action, closing gender gaps in science, and leveraging the participation and influence of women – including Indigenous women – in the management, conservation, and sustainable use of natural resources. The outcomes of this Call to Action were subsequently integrated into major global events including the UN Ocean Decade Conferences (2024, 2025), the World Press Freedom Day Conference (May 2024), the UN Summit of the Future (September 2024), and the World Science Forum.

Speakers of UNESCO's Global Dialogue "Gender Equality to Solve the Climate Emergency" gather on the International Day of Women in Multilateralism 2024.

© UNESCO/Capucine Petit

Addressing gender inequalities in the fields of freshwater and the ocean

UNESCO made strides in promoting gender equality in water and ocean sciences, recognising that women's participation is essential for effective water resource management and ocean conservation. Initiatives in 2024-2025 focused on generating new data and knowledge in these emerging fields, creating enabling environments for women's participation, building technical skills, and influencing policy frameworks.

UNESCO supported Member States in **advancing gender equality in water education at all levels**, while also training water professionals to develop the skills needed to address complex water challenges that have a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Over the 2024-2025 period, a total of 100,000 water professionals – including 40 per cent of women – were trained. In Argentina, for example, training programmes on water management and gender equality have equipped water professionals with tools to address gender disparities in access to and control over water resources. Moreover, 8 African countries implemented the *UN World Water Development Report* findings and recommendations for inclusive water management.

The 10th World Water Forum marked an important milestone for UNESCO's role in promoting gender-inclusive approaches to water management and governance with the launch of the **Multi-stakeholder Coalition for gender equality in water**. This coalition is hosted on a digital platform and serves as a hub for a community of practice. It has been designed to facilitate knowledge exchange and to enhance collaboration on water and gender initiatives. Together with the Multi-stakeholder Coalition of nearly 190 members, including 28 Member States, UNESCO's *World Water Assessment Programme* has achieved significant reach contributing to global commitments on SDG 5 on Gender Equality and SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation. These efforts have been instrumental in reinforcing capacities in target countries to integrate gender equality actions into water governance using toolkits and methodologies for sex-disaggregated data collection, publication of regional studies and guidance documents.

Throughout 2024-2025, a total of 19 countries successfully incorporated gender-responsive indicators into their water management and governance systems.

UNESCO has also made notable progress in **advancing women's participation in ocean sciences and governance**. To drive this progress, UNESCO's strategy centred on advocacy, amplifying the visibility of women role models, and removing systemic barriers to their participation in research, leadership, and decision-making. The *Dialogue for Building Bridges between Intersectional Gender Equality and Ocean Science* at the UN Ocean Decade Conference (2024) in Barcelona offered a unique opportunity to emphasize the importance of integrating gender perspectives into ocean science and governance throughout Decade Actions. Another powerful example is UNESCO's work with Maya Gabeira, a professional big wave surfer. As a UNESCO Champion for the Ocean and Youth, she takes an active role in promoting UNESCO's advocacy on ocean-sustainability issues. Her illustrated book, published in 2024, shares her journey of learning from the ocean and taking action against plastic pollution and coral destruction, inspiring young women to engage with ocean conservation. Significant steps have been taken by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission's Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (IOC/WESTPAC), which has implemented concrete measures to increase women's participation in its governance processes.

> ***I hope to inspire people. I remember how difficult it was to pave my way as a women in sport, and how big a dreamer I was. But I was able to believe in myself, and that made things possible. And I think that's our power. We can never forget that.***
>
> ***Maya Gabeira***
> *UNESCO Champion for the Ocean and Youth*

These include encouraging UNESCO Member States to prioritise women candidates in national delegations to biennial intergovernmental sessions and in nominations to international expert groups. Women participants in IOC/WESTPAC activities are now given priority for financial support, removing a significant barrier to participation.

In the field, innovative initiatives have explored the linkages between fighting the effects of climate crisis in marine zones and advancing gender equality. In Ecuador, for instance, UNESCO strengthened the resilience of mangrove ecosystems while fostering woman leadership in local fishing communities to achieve environmental sustainability, economic security, and safe community spaces. 91 women and 83 men benefited from climate–ecosystem training, leadership labs, and safety modules.

© Tamara Klink

Tamara Klink, UNESCO Green Citizens Pathfinder, shares her Arctic overwintering journey in a UNESCO web story series, raising her voice on climate change and gender equality.

Gender equality was mainstreamed in all the training curricula, which also included activities specifically intended to empowering women in fisheries governance. The project also contributed to strengthening partnerships with community associations to institutionalize women's participation in decision-making and helped to draft local protocols on sustainable and safe shellfish gathering.

Generating and disseminating new knowledge and data on water and oceans is another key pillar of UNESCO's efforts to promote gender equality. By providing both qualitative and quantitative evidence of systemic inequalities, and by monitoring their evolution, UNESCO offers strategic insights that serve as a compass for Member States in revising and designing policies that fully integrate a gender perspective.

In this regard, UNESCO's pioneering publication *Unchartered Waters: An exploration for gender equality and the Ocean* (2024) provides an analysis of gender equality issues in ocean science and governance. It shows that women pursuing careers in ocean science face numerous barriers at every stage, including limited access to education, underrepresentation in research and leadership roles, higher family responsibilities, insufficient mentorship and professional networks, persistent stereotypes, and increased risks of harassment and discrimination. This hinders women's ability to publish, secure funding, gain recognition, and advance to senior positions compared to their male colleagues. This report was presented to the G20 Ministers in Brazil in 2024 and at the UN Ocean Conference held in France in 2025 and includes specific evidence-based recommendations for creating more inclusive ocean science communities. In addition, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission will deliver the third edition of the *Global Ocean Science Report* in 2026, which includes gender disaggregated information on personnel engaged in different sectors of ocean science. This unique assessment allows countries and organisations to identify new opportunities to further foster gender equality in ocean science.

Box 5

The Women of Malolo Island: Champions of Water Resilience

On Malolo Island in western Fiji, climate change is rewriting the rules of survival. Villages depend entirely on rainwater and scarce groundwater, making every drop precious. But when the dry season arrives between May and October, the taps run empty, schools close, and families face impossible choices.

A groundbreaking pilot study in the villages of Solevu and Yaro revealed a striking paradox: while women shoulder the primary responsibility for managing household water supplies, they remain largely excluded from village water committees and training programmes. Only 12 per cent of the women interviewed were members of water committees, and just 19 per cent had received water-related trainings. This gender gap becomes especially pronounced during water shortages. Women's domestic roles intensify while their voices in decision-making remain unheard.

The research, conducted in partnership with the Fiji Meteorological Services (FMS) and Water Authority Fiji (WAF), generated unique sex-disaggregated data and found that women experience disproportionate impacts from water scarcity due to social barriers and traditional gender roles. Yet these same women have developed innovative coping strategies and methods for saving and reusing water that could benefit entire communities.

The study's valuable insights have prompted recommendations for expansion across Fiji and throughout Pacific Small Island Developing States, as part of the broader UNESCO capacity-building programme *Accelerating Sanitation for All in Asia and the Pacific*. Through webinars, workshops and field training, this programme has mobilised representatives from water-related institutions across Pacific SIDS, helping them to mainstream gender equality considerations in water plans and policies.

2024-2025 IN REVIEW – FROM COMMITMENT TO IMPACT

In 2024–2025, significant progress was made along the path toward gender equality for environmental action. UNESCO provided funding, training, networking, and mentoring opportunities. It amplified the visibility of women role models to inspire the next generation of girls to become leaders in sciences and environmental action with a focus on water and oceans, and mobilised the global community through strategic advocacy and a unique global awareness-raising campaign to move the needle on structural barriers and harmful stereotypes.

UNESCO continued to produce knowledge to inform policy change, while offering technical assistance and building the capacities of Member States to adopt gender-responsive policy frameworks in science. These efforts also aimed to enhance their resilience to environmental challenges, including by addressing the specific vulnerabilities, needs, and priorities of women. Programmatic action placed particular emphasis on Africa and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), whose adaptation and mitigation efforts continue to inspire the path forward.

© UNESCO/LAIZA Rahim Yussufu

"Through the UNESCO BEAR II project, I received training on establishing relationships through community groups, marketing online, and crafting products from seaweed." Pavu Mcha Hamisi, entrepreneurship from Tanzania.

UNESCO'S 2024-2025 MONITORING DATA

- **7 global initiatives advanced the careers of young scientists**, ensured gender parity and gave visibility to the innovations and technological research of women scientists
- **6 countries** supported to develop inclusive **gender-transformative STI policies** and innovation platforms for entrepreneurship
- **91 countries** have gender-disaggregated **STI research and development data** available in the UIS database
- **21 gender-responsive scientific assessments** conducted and **6 Global networks** supported to facilitate **local and Indigenous knowledge transmission by women** contributing to ecosystems and biodiversity monitoring
- **10 SIDS** empowered in **gender-responsive ecosystem and biodiversity conservation**, climate education, DRR, water management and governance
- **14 SIDS, 3 countries** from Africa and **2 countries** from Asia and the Pacific enabled to apply **gender responsive indicators in water management** and governance
- **100,000 water professionals** trained to address complex water challenges with a focus on women and youth

Results extracted from selected gender-related indicators of UNESCO Programme and Budget 2024-2025 linked to Strategic Objective 2.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

3

PROMOTE INCLUSION AND COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

© Luisa Dorr

Violence against women is increasing around the world, sparing no woman, whether in her private life or in public spaces and increasingly in the digital sphere, posing serious threats to human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Audrey Azoulay
Director-General of UNESCO

UNESCO promotes inclusion to achieve sustainable development and build peaceful societies by tackling gender-based violence, discrimination and stereotypes, including in the digital environment. It works to equip learners and learning environments to be safe and healthy, improve women's working conditions, employment opportunities and economic, social and cultural rights, while also promoting gender equality in the media and cultural sectors.

Build inclusive, just and peaceful societies by promoting freedom of expression, cultural diversity, education for global citizenship, and protecting the heritage

PROMOTE INCLUSION AND COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

DISCRIMINATION & STEREOTYPES

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION & CREATION

DECENT WORK & SOCIAL PROTECTION

Contributing to SDG Targets 4.2a, 5.1, 5.2, 5.6, 8.5, 8.8, 16.10

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

1 in 4 countries report backlash on **women's rights** in 2024

(UN WOMEN, 2025)

Women athletes receive only 5% of all sports news coverage

(UNESCO, 2024)

Women are 45% of gamers but only 6% of game protagonists in best-selling video games

(UNESCO, 2024)

26% of **women journalists** report negative mental health impacts from online violence

(UNESCO, 2024)

Nearly 1 on 3 **students** are physically assaulted at least once during the school year

(UNESCO, 2019)

Up to 25% of **adolescents** report experiencing sexual violence with up to 40% of these incidents occurring in schools where **girls** are particularly vulnerable

(UNESCO, 2024)

STATE OF THE WORLD: TACKLING HARMFUL GENDER NORMS, STEREOTYPES AND DISCRIMINATION FOR INCLUSIVE, JUST AND PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

Gender-based discrimination and violence remains a global reality, limiting progress towards inclusive, just and peaceful societies. Data collected to mark 30 years since the Beijing Declaration reveals a complex picture. Today, one in four people still consider it justifiable for a man to beat his wife[1] and on average, a woman or girl is killed by someone in her own family every 10 minutes[2] – a statistic that reflects not just individual tragedies but systemic failures to transform legal protections into lived safety and equality. Alongside physical manifestations, digital platforms have created additional opportunities for harm, where women face disproportionately higher rates of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including cyberstalking, digital harassment, and persistent threats that often spill into real-world consequences. According to global studies, 58 per cent of young women and girls have experienced online harassment.[3]

All videos featured on the top five deepfake pornography websites depict women with 96% involving non-consensual intimate content

There is a pressing need to **recognise and actively dismantle the deeply rooted pervasive social values and norms that reinforce and perpetuate violence**. Gender biases shape mindset and behaviours, often legitimizing unequal treatment and normalizing discrimination for women and girls, while also restricting opportunities for all. These biases become embedded in laws, policies and cultural practices, institutionalizing systemic discrimination that extends far beyond individual cases. In practice, this means women continue to earn lower wages than men, are underrepresented at leadership levels, face social stigma around their own healthcare, and spend over 2.5 times more hours on unpaid care work – which, if monetized, could represent over 40 per cent of GDP in some countries.[4]

Evidence confirms the **harmful influence of gender stereotypes on society**, revealing a troubling backlash against women's rights in one out of four countries in 2024.[5] This regression is fuelled by a spread of harmful content on social media.[6] Alarmingly, 60 per cent of Gen Z men and 57 per cent of Millennials men across 31 countries believe that gender equality has gone so far that it discriminates against them.[7] As stated by Laura Turquet, Deputy Chief of Research and Data at UN Women: "There has been a development of a "manosphere", an online ecosystem where extreme and outdated ideas, particularly about violence against women are growing".[8]

Education, media, culture and sports are powerful levers for gender equality. Yet despite their potential, they continue to reflect and propagate existing inequalities. In schools, for instance, gender stereotypes are key drivers of various forms of violence.[9] A 2023 study undertaken in seven African countries showed that 25 per cent of girls had experienced violence in or outside of school in the last 12 months.[10]

Other intersecting factors, such as ethnicity, class, disability, or sexual orientation further compound their vulnerability.[11] The digital sphere also poses serious risks for school-aged girls, with some experiencing their first instance of technology-facilitated gender-based violence as early as age nine.[12] Breaking this cycle begins with transforming education into a safe and inclusive space, where early socialization and learning opportunities are no longer intertwined with the internalization of discriminatory gender norms and expectations.[13]

The sports field – another lifelong space for socialization – elevates role models beyond the playground. It celebrates physical achievement, promotes values such as teamwork and fair play, and builds confidence and leadership among players. However, **for the world of sports to become a game-changer for gender equality, it must confront grappling discrimination**. These disparities emerge early, within physical education classes, and persist at the professional level. Despite representing 40 per cent of sport participants, women athletes receive only 5 per cent of media coverage, lag significantly behind for media sponsorship opportunities and face important pay gaps.

Only 16% of countries have adopted a comprehensive legal framework to address violence in schools

Leadership roles remain male-dominated, with only 27 per cent of major sports federations chaired by women. Moreover, women in sports continue to experience high levels of gender-based violence.

Similar patterns can be observed in the culture and media sectors – two other highly influential spheres in shaping societal norms and perceptions. From systematic exclusion in leadership positions, stereotyped gender representation in media and cultural content, unequal career advancement in newsrooms and informal precarious working conditions in the cultural sector, there continues to be several barriers hindering women's progress in their professional lives.

Nearly twice as many professional women athletes as men experienced sexual abuse as children in sport

© UNESCO/Marie Etchegoyen

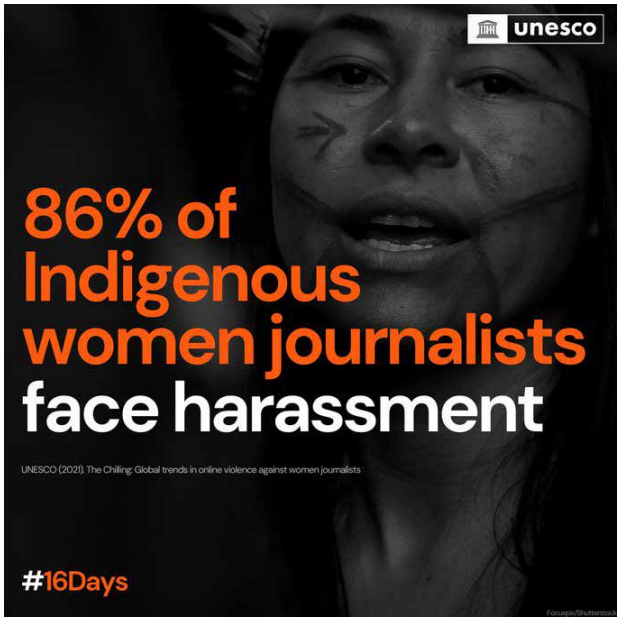
Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, with Paralympic swimmer Husnah Kukundakwe (Uganda), on the occasion of the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games torch relay at UNESCO headquarters

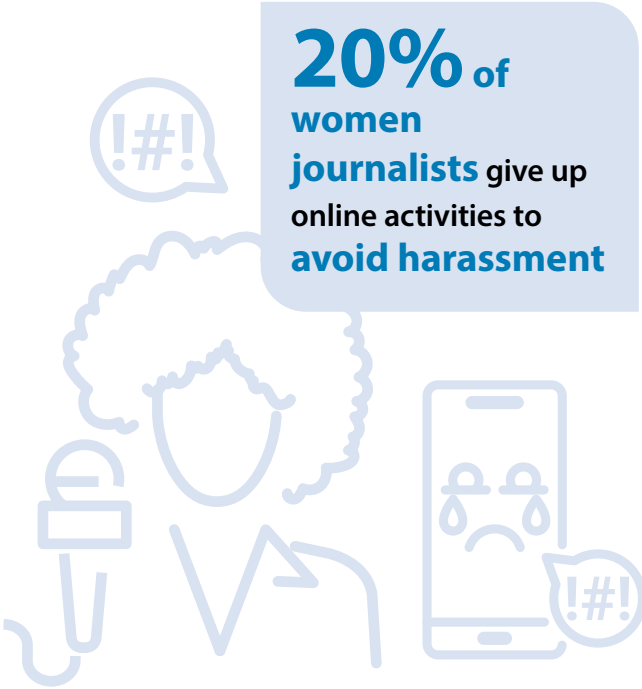
In the media sector, women hold only 25 per cent of top management positions and represent the same proportion of sources and subjects featured in news content worldwide.[14] In the cultural and creative sectors, they constitute 38 per cent of the workforce[15] in creative industries, hold only 31 per cent of executive positions in the arts and manage just 25 per cent of World Heritage Sites.[16] In areas where some progress is noticeable, such as in the music industry, representation still falls short. Indeed, women now represent 30 per cent of DJs performing in electronic music festivals,[17] 36 per cent of composers,[18] and just 13 per cent of orchestra conductors.[19] In the gaming industry, the need for improvement is even greater. Despite constituting nearly half of all gamers, women comprise 23 per cent of the workforce and only 6 per cent of protagonists in best-selling video games from 1985-2022.[20]

This persistent inequality matters because these gatekeeping positions determine which stories get told, how cultural narratives are shaped, and where industry resources flow. The underrepresentation becomes more stark at higher levels of authority, creating what researchers call a "broken rung" phenomenon where women's participation decreases as power and influence increase.

This situation is exacerbated by alarming levels of gender-based violence that threaten the safety of women journalists, artists and cultural professionals, while also silencing their voices, in both physical and virtual spaces. **Freedom to express oneself and create without fear of violence or reprisal is a fundamental human right that is still denied to women**, especially those in the public eye who face extraordinary targeting. These attacks often occur during critical moments, such as conflicts and elections. According to *The Chilling* report, almost three quarters of women journalists who participated in the survey reported having experienced online violence and for every one in five, this digital harassment was followed by physical assault.

For women artists and cultural professionals, harassment, threats and other forms of violence, including imprisonment, represent 60 per cent of reported cases. The remaining 40 per cent concern acts of censorship.[21] In the digital sphere, while platforms offer new opportunities for expression and audience building, they simultaneously expose women to gendered harassment and trolling, hate speech, attacks on privacy, stalking and surveillance that limit their freedom of expression.[22] Guaranteeing their safety and upholding their working conditions would be fundamental steps forward.





UNESCO PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

In 2024-2025, UNESCO focused on promoting gender equality and fight against gender-based violence to create inclusive, fair, and peaceful societies by:

- Tackling stereotypes and discrimination harmful to women and girls;
- Safeguarding women's freedom of expression and creation;
- Ensuring women's decent work and promoting their voices in the culture and media sectors;
- Shaping novel perspectives on the role of women in history and society.

In all its endeavours, UNESCO pursues its vision through actions tailored to its mandate, complementing the efforts of its partners within the UN and beyond. This involves leveraging its convening powers and shaping the international agenda, building a foundation of research and analysis to understand and address gender-based stereotypes and violence, and adapting global standards to effect change at the national level in UNESCO's areas of expertise, particularly in the culture and media sectors.

Tackling gender discrimination and stereotypes

During the 2024-2025 period, UNESCO's action focused on three key areas: combating gender-based violence across society through an intersectional approach; engaging men and boys to challenge gender discrimination and harmful stereotypes; and using education and sports to promote safe environments free of gender bias and violence.

Fighting gender-based violence requires addressing it as a distinct challenge, while also recognizing its connections to other forms of violence, discrimination and racism. UNESCO's 2024 *Global Outlook on Racism and Discrimination* demonstrated that overlapping identities intensify discrimination, with 28 per cent of intersectional instances involving gender.[23]

In 2024, UNESCO convened the 4th Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination in Barcelona gathering over 2,000 participants from 85 countries and 50,000 online attendees to advance intersectional solutions to racism and discrimination. The Global Forum launched the *Global Alliance against Racism and Discrimination* and a roadmap for change.

© PLAN Internacional

María Alejandra, Maricarmen, and Satomy at UNESCO Peru office for the 'Girls Take Power' campaign.

Box 1

UNESCO's Caribbean Sheroes Initiative Challenges Gender-Based Violence

In the Caribbean, where one in three women experiences gender-based violence during her lifetime, UNESCO is taking decisive action through the groundbreaking *Caribbean Sheroes initiative*. This collaborative effort with the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies represents a powerful response to one of the region's most pervasive human rights violations.

The initiative tackles the root causes of gender inequality by addressing the traditional social norms and patriarchal power structures that perpetuate discrimination across political, economic, and social systems. Rather than merely treating symptoms, UNESCO's approach focuses on dismantling the underlying cultural and social norms that enable gender-based violence and inequality to persist.

Recognizing the **crucial role that men and boys play in shifting harmful gender dynamics**, UNESCO continued its efforts to build knowledge and skills through its flagship programme *Transforming MEN'talities*. Toolkits were launched to offer context-nuanced guidance, and a Master Class equipped over 800 youth from 43 countries with knowledge and tools to design their own projects. In Africa alone, over 250,000 youth were engaged through the **#changeMENtalities** social media challenge and 5,000 graduated from soft and civic skills digital training. In total, 19 countries were actively engaged in 2024-2025 in this flagship programme and significant milestones were achieved in India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, and South Africa, engaging men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality. In Kenya, for instance, culturally sensitive research methodologies and tools on femicide and gender-based violence as well as on gender norms were developed through expert consultations and piloted focus group discussions. UNESCO also contributed through the UN Gender Technical Working Group to the finalization and launch in August 2025 of the National Male Engagement and Inclusion Strategy for Kenya, and the organization, in September 2025, of the *Global Webinar Series on Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Violence and Femicide in Kenya* during which preliminary findings of the research works undertaken were presented and discussed with a wide range of partners.

As the leading agency for education, UNESCO promotes safe and inclusive learning environments. Gender-based violence and school bullying directly contributes to school dropout rates and causes psychological trauma for many children. In response, UNESCO promotes schools where all young people feel safe, cared for and respected. The *Safe, Seen and Included* report launched in 2023, serves as a comprehensive guide for policymakers and educators worldwide on SOGIE-inclusive education. It underscores how curricula that resonate with all learners, in their diversity, can nurture belonging, empathy, and understanding for all. In 2024-2025, UNESCO actively disseminated the report's recommendations through collaborations with UNDP, the World Bank, the Council of Europe, and civil society partners. This included organizing global webinars, such as "Embracing Inclusivity: Cultivating Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments for Gender and Sexually Diverse Youth" in 2024, and capacity-development workshops, notably in the Asia and Pacific region, aiming to promote grassroots-driven change in education.

> *1 in 3 learners is bullied every month globally. By the time a child reaches out to an adult, the vast majority of kids have been dealing with bullying and trying to ignore it for a long time.*
>
> ***Rosalind Wiseman***
> *Author*

At the higher education level, the *O3 PLUS* project is currently implemented in 38 universities across six countries of East and Southern Africa reaching over 3 million students. Protocols for reporting and addressing gender-based violence were established in academic settings, university staff were trained on prevention and response mechanisms, and safe spaces for survivors were created. UNESCO also launched *Safe to Learn and Thrive: Ending Violence in and through Education* which addresses gendered drivers of violence in education. The report, and UNESCO's advocacy, influenced the outcomes of the *First Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children*, where 44 countries pledged to make learning environments safe.

Significant progress was made to challenge harmful gender stereotypes in the field of sport. Through its *Fit for Life Global Sport Alliance*, UNESCO advanced awareness-raising campaigns, organised global conferences and capacity building activities to tackle violence against women and girls in sport. In 2024, the *Sport and Gender Quality Game Plan* was launched as a toolkit to support policy-makers and sports practitioners design and deliver safe and inclusive sport policies and programmes. The *#Change the Game* campaign, launched in the run up to the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic games, achieved unprecedented global reach, with over 900 million users engaged. In total, 74 countries promoted positive role models and fought gender-based violence, and 30 countries developed sport and/or physical education policies with special attention to women and girls.

Box 2

University Students Combatting Gender-based Violence on Kenyan Campuses

UNESCO's O3 PLUS Safer Campuses Campaign has supported institutions in developing robust policies tackling gender-based violence and establishing reporting mechanisms. At the **Kenya Medical Training College** (KMTC), UNESCO helped establish a Students' Wellness Centre and gender desk, providing safe spaces for reporting cases and offering health services, counselling and case management.

Jeremiah, a 21-year-old Science student at KMTC champions this programme leading the fight on campus. *"One of the main challenges in fighting gender-based violence here in Kenya is our patriarchal society. We came across male resistance when it comes to the fight against gender-based violence because it challenges our culture."* explains Jeremiah.

Other students joined the *Safer Campuses Campaign* including Diana, a Campus MeToo Movement Leader, after hearing disturbing stories within her friend groups. Marvin, a 21-year-old radiology student, began his activism as a freshman campus representative when victims sought his help. The lack of support mechanisms inspired him to take a leadership role in prevention, noting that speaking out remains one of their biggest challenges.

The impact of the Safer Campuses Campaign is evident as students like Jeremiah, Marvin, and Diana take ownership of the fight. Through advocacy, education, policies, and support mechanisms, they are transforming university campuses into safer, more inclusive spaces.

> *Gender bias and harassment are universal, including in football. You can hear 'go back to the kitchen' among many other things. Social media platforms also exacerbate this type of harassment.*
>
> ***Bouchra Karboubi***
> *International Football Referee*

Box 3

Champions Without Barriers Through Sport in Peru

The bustling districts of San Juan de Lurigancho, Comas, and San Martín de Porres are confronted by high rates of teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence. UNESCO launched a groundbreaking initiative in 2024 to provide new futures for young women from these districts through sport.

The *Champions without Barriers* project has mobilized over 300 students across ten public schools, forming girls' football teams while engaging boys as allies in challenging gender stereotypes. Physical education teachers, trained as champions of change, are creating inclusive environments where traditional barriers evaporate on the pitch.

Early results reveal profound transformation. Participating girls reported increased confidence and leadership skills that extend far beyond the football field, empowering them to advocate for themselves at school and home. The initiative's collaborative approach has united educators, families, and students in creating safer spaces where young people challenge the notion that football belongs exclusively to boys.

The Local Educational Management Units are now partnering with the Fútbol Más Perú Foundation, ensuring sustainable impact beyond schools. Through sport, these young women are not just changing the game – they are transforming their communities.

Safeguarding women's freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right that UNESCO works to safeguard not only through its global standard setting work but also through specific actions to protect journalists and media professionals.

In implementing the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, UNESCO actively **safeguards women's freedom of expression** and protects women journalists through targeted initiatives. To help translate international standards into national policies, UNESCO works closely with Member States and provides tailored technical assistance. In total, 35 countries implemented the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, with particular attention to the safety of women journalists

Gender-based violence and discrimination pose serious threats to the safety of women journalists, often forcing them into self-censorship, withdrawal from public life, or even complete abandonment from their profession. Throughout the biennium, UNESCO provided extensive training to tackle online and offline harassment, discrimination and violence against women journalists in and through the media. The launch of the *Safeguarding Women's Voices: Enhancing Gender-Responsive Safety Strategies* initiative with the International Women's Media Foundation provided support to 22 media outlets from the Global South to strengthen their safety policies and provide customized safety trainings. In Somalia, the capacities of journalists on gender mainstreaming and on issues of sexual harassment within newsrooms were strengthened and led to the adoption of gender-responsive reporting guidelines and anti-harassment policies in multiple media organizations. In Ukraine, over 200 journalists and media professionals were trained on gender-responsive reporting, including on how to ethically report on domestic abuse. Overall, 24 countries have increased capacity to improve legislative and institutional frameworks related to freedom of expression, access to information, and mainstreaming a gender-responsive approach.

> ***Women journalists are not only on the frontlines of reporting, but also on the frontlines of attacks.***
>
> ***Therese Patricia San Diego Torres***
> *President of the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication*

These efforts are **grounded in robust research and data gathering** to support informed decision-making. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNESCO supported in 2024 the NGO Comunicación para la Igualdad in studying newsroom protocols on gender-based violence across 15 countries. The resulting report *#MediosSinViolencias*, based on data from 100 media outlets, informed the development of a Framework Protocol promoting gender-responsive safety policies, clear reporting mechanisms, and supportive newsroom environments to strengthen accountability in the media sector.

To advance the international agenda, UNESCO convened in 2025 experts to review progress 30 years after the Beijing Declaration, specifically its Strategic Objective J on women and the media. Key policy recommendations for international organizations, media regulators, and digital platforms were developed around four main themes: advancing gender equality in newsrooms, dismantling gender stereotypes in the media, tackling offline and technology-facilitated violence against women journalists, and addressing risks and opportunities of AI on gender representation in media. They were presented at the 69th Commission on the Status of Women to promote gender equality, combat gender-based violence and ensure responsible AI governance in journalism while fostering diverse and inclusive media ecosystems worldwide. In line with this work, escalating threats to women journalists, particularly through technology-facilitated gender-based violence, are at the center of the 2025 International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists (2 November) on the theme "Chat GBV: Raising Awareness on AI-facilitated Gender-Based Violence against women journalists".

© UNESCO/WMC

30 Phnom Penh police officers joined dialogues with women journalists, as part of UNESCO's work to promote safer media work.

Box 4

Violence-Free Media: Addressing Gender Violence in Latin American Journalism

The comprehensive publication *Violence-Free Media*, supported by UNESCO, provides crucial insights into gender-based violence in Latin American media organizations and offers tools to improve working conditions. Developed in collaboration with the Asociación Civil Comunicación para la Igualdad and the Federation of Journalists of Latin America and the Caribbean (FEPALC), the publication documents the pressing reality of gender violence in newsrooms across the region.

100 media outlets from 15 Latin American countries were involved in the research, revealing alarming statistics: 75 per cent of respondents know at least one case of gender violence against journalists, with 57 per cent of news organizations lacking formal protocols to address such incidents. The report identifies psychological and verbal violence (65.5 per cent) as most prevalent, followed by sexual harassment (28 per cent) and digital violence (21 per cent). It revealed that in 54.5 per cent of documented cases, attackers faced no consequences, with nearly half of attackers (49 per cent) holding management positions. When complaints were filed, 41.5 per cent of cases resulted in retaliation against the complainant.

Violence-Free Media includes interviews with journalists, analysis of gender violence protocols in regional media outlets. It concludes with a proposed Framework Protocol for Prevention and Action against Discrimination, Harassment and Violence in Journalistic Work and a call to digital platforms to increase transparency, improve complaint mechanisms, and regulate coordinated attacks against journalists. Additionally, it urges states to protect journalists' safety through regulatory frameworks while encouraging civil society to monitor implementation of inclusion policies and strengthen journalists' unions in addressing gender violence.

Ensuring women's decent work and promoting their voices in the culture and media sectors

Building peaceful, diverse and inclusive societies also means addressing economic and social inequalities. To this end, UNESCO continued advancing women's economic empowerment and social protection in the cultural and media sectors through targeted interventions to tackle the barriers they face in the professional lives.

As a global leader in the culture sector, UNESCO advanced gender equality through the World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2025 – bringing together Ministers of Culture from around the world. The final document embeds gender equality across key priorities and reaffirms the need to uphold cultural rights for all. To inform these high-level policy discussions, UNESCO produced new data and knowledge through multiple global publications. The *UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies* explores the state of cultural rights, culture across heritage, creativity and the economy and the impacts of digital transformation and climate change on culture, among others. It highlights growing gender disparities affecting women artists, cultural professionals, and citizens, underscoring the need for strengthened monitoring and coordinated action.

© UNESCO

Participants at the vocational training center in Mosul, part of the UNESCO #ReviveTheSpiritofMosul Initiative through the Employment for Youth in Nineveh (EYE-N) project.

Culture for All[24] is the first-of-its-kind toolkit to offer step-by-step guidance on how to mainstream gender equality into cultural policies. Prepared with Eight Goals One Foundation (8one), *The Gender Equality Quest in Video Games* report provides a global overview of gender dynamics in gaming and explores the potential to promote gender equality and human rights in a creative industry that reaches over 3.30 billion gamers daily. UNESCO's evidenced based advocacy work is bearing fruits with 76 countries now supporting inclusion and gender equality in the cultural and creative sectors. A key prerequisite for achieving this is the safeguarding of the social and economic rights of women artists and cultural professionals. Supported through the *UNESCO-Aschberg Programme for Artists and Cultural Professionals*, multiple projects demonstrate this commitment. In Angola, for example, a secure multidisciplinary creative space was established in Luanda to provide artists, particularly women, with crucial legal information for navigating professional landscapes under Angolan law.

> ***Data proves that women cultural professionals tend to earn less and they are often in less powerful positions. They are seen in front of the camera, while men dominate the director and producer roles controlling the narrative.***
>
> ***Unathi Lutshaba***
> *Executive Director, South African Cultural Observatory*

In order to tackle systemic barriers to career development and growth, **targeted training opportunities for women cultural professionals were introduced**. Building on the 2022 *UNESCO-Nara Film Residency*'s success, a new residency programme was launched in 2025 for 10 emerging African women filmmakers. Partnering with Morocco's Foundation Tamayouz Cinema and under the mentorship of renowned directors Abderrahmane Sissako and Hicham Lasri, participants gained strategic industry connections and professional development opportunities, ensuring lasting career impacts for women on the African cinematic landscape. In South Sudan, a two-week training for 25 aspiring young women filmmakers was also delivered with the local entertainment platform GOGO Play.

It provided a new opportunity for formal training in a country where dedicated film schools are currently absent, despite the rapid growth of its film industry. Beyond artistic and technical skills, building an online presence is increasingly essential for accessing international markets and enhancing visibility in the creative economy. UNESCO therefore trained 20 Ethiopian women visual artists through digital entrepreneurship, marketing, and branding, in collaboration with Gerar – The Creative Hub.

UNESCO **combined training and entrepreneurship opportunities** through the award-winning *Transcultura* programme to professionalize 2,783 young artists and creators – 55 per cent of whom are women – making significant regional progress in gender equality. Innovative financing mechanisms addressing the systemic exclusion of women-led businesses' from funding have also been introduced through the *Creative Entrepreneurs Initiative* in the Bahamas and the broader Caribbean region.

© Netflix

UNESCO and Triggerfish Foundation expand animation training, creating new opportunities for women in Africa's film sector.

Box 5 Girls for Culture | Culture for Girls in Senegal

Since 2016, UNESCO has championed gender equality as a key driver for leveraging culture in support of sustainable development in West Africa. Its new programme *Girls for Culture | Culture for Girls* advances efforts to create an enabling environment for women by fostering access to training, career development and by enhancing their visibility in the cultural and creative sectors.

The programme launched a pioneering regional study across 15 West African countries to assess gender inequalities. Based on desk research, online consultations, and field surveys conducted in Benin, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Senegal the study highlights challenges faced by women artists and cultural professionals in areas such as education, employment, funding and artistic freedom. The knowledge and data generated will help shape policy discussions towards more gender-responsive cultural governance.

In parallel, pilot training modules have been developed for gender focal points within Ministries of Culture, Environment, Education, and Communication to strengthen their capacities to mainstream gender equality in cultural policy-making. Regional trainings of trainers are planned for the next biennium to support effective adoption and implementation of the modules.

To inspire girls and young women to pursue careers in culture and heritage, the programme has also produced two booklets – one for schoolgirls and another for high-school and university students. These booklets feature diverse career paths and engaging stories of women role models from the sub-region. By raising public awareness and offering accessible and practical content, these booklets promote career guidance and help cultivate the next generation of professional women in the culture and heritage sectors.

Environmental conservation initiatives provided another strategic avenue to integrate gender considerations alongside economic empowerment strategies. Brazil's *Amazon Biosphere Reserves Project* supports women-led enterprises utilizing traditional knowledge and sustainable practices, creating economic opportunities while preserving cultural heritage and environmental resources.

Cross-regional peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges have also been identified as a powerful tool for women's economic empowerment. The *Mexico-Peru Binational Textile Art* programme facilitated comprehensive skills transfer between women artisans through binational gatherings at Lima's Art Museum and Pachacamac Museum. Participants master diverse textile techniques from Yucatecan embroidery to Peruvian weaving methods, while gaining capabilities in fabric manipulation, thread creation from recycled materials, and sustainable production practices strengthening their professional networks and access to the market.

For effective career development, **networking and mentoring play a vital role in unlocking new economic opportunities**. The *Creators Lab* in Africa is a case in point. In 2024-2025, UNESCO worked with the Triggerfish Foundation to offer mentoring, capacity building, and networking to 47 women and non-binary persons in the animation industry across Africa. This groundbreaking initiative provides technical and vocational education and training in animation production for television and feature films and offers mentorship sessions for participants to pitch their projects. Gender-specific challenges, including securing equal pay and preventing discrimination and sexual harassment are also addressed during these sessions. Similarly, the *Stories x Women* programme, implemented with Women in Animation (WIA) and Disney offered women animators mentoring by internationally acclaimed experts and one-on-one coaching. Participants were then prepared to pitch their projects at the 2025 Annecy International Animation Film Festival and Market (MIFA), helping to amply diverse voices within the animation industry.

Box 6 UNESCO Champions Gender Equality in the Global Music Industry

UNESCO's Creative Cities of Music (UCOM) subnetwork has launched an innovative project called *Equaliser* to tackle gender inequalities in the music industry worldwide. It brings together music professionals and expert facilitators to collaborate, share knowledge, and support each other through three distinct professional development modules. The programme includes a leadership intensive course for mid-career professionals, skills discovery workshops for women in the music sector, and professional respect training days focused on preventing sexual harassment.

"*Equaliser* gives us a platform to address and challenge the systemic inequalities that persist in our global music community," explained UCOM coordinator Sandra Wall. The project's modular design ensures accessibility for cities worldwide, enabling them to empower their citizens with resources for creating more equitable music communities. UNESCO Creative Cities Network Goodwill ambassador Maria Francesca Merloni emphasized the timeliness of the project, noting that music communicates "the essence and truth of each individual" regardless of "genre, attitude or orientation."

UNESCO's involvement in this initiative demonstrates its ongoing commitment to transforming the cultural landscape by creating more inclusive environments for women and girls. By focusing on professional development, leadership training, and sexual harassment prevention, UNESCO is addressing both the symptoms and causes of gender inequality in the music industry.

© UNESCO

In the media sector, promoting decent working conditions for all women journalists remain essential for advancing gender equality. Over the biennium, UNESCO strengthened the capacities of media institutions to employ, among other groups, Indigenous women and women with disabilities. UNESCO also organized training workshops in 10 African countries to integrate gender equality and disability into media management practices and content production. UNESCO's work in transforming media content development and operations has also yielded tangible results in Mongolia and China, where media professionals' capacity was enhanced to produce inclusive content that represents diverse experiences and challenges stereotypes.

Securing women's contributions and roles in the history of the world

Women's voices have been marginalized or omitted from historical narratives, media content and cultural expressions, leading to incomplete and biased understandings of history. Therefore, UNESCO works to ensure that women's stories and contributions are fully represented across living, cultural, and documentary heritage. This commitment not only corrects historical injustices but also empowers future generations, shapes inclusive identities, and supports the advancement of gender equality in all spheres of society.

As a standard-setter, UNESCO leads by example. The revised Operational Guidelines for the 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage now requires its States Parties to **mainstream gender perspectives into their intangible cultural heritage policies** rather than be treated as optional add-ons. In 2024, several practices with explicit gender equality dimensions were also inscribed on the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage, like the Traditional Li Textile Techniques highlighting over 3,000 years of women's textile knowledge transmission in China's Hainan province.

© UNESCO Dakar/Layepro

UNESCO organized the "Women, Heritage, and Digital Technology: Safeguarding World Heritage in Africa" event in Senegal.

Attention has also been paid to gender equality within the *Memory of the World* (MoW) international and national committees, who are responsible for deciding on the elements to be inscribed on this list. This commitment to amplifying women's voices and achievements is directly reflected in the recent nominations and inscriptions of documentary and intangible heritage items. For example, following the inclusion of a section on gender equality in the nomination form, the number of *Memory of the World* inscriptions spotlighting women's contributions has risen. Of the 74 new inscriptions on the MoW International Register for 2025, 10 items have **significant connections to women's history, gender equality, or women's roles in society**. These range from direct advocacy for women's rights (Kartini) to documentation of women's experiences in extreme circumstances (Ravensbrück), pioneering women in male-dominated fields (travel writers, Sami tradition bearers), and historical records showing women's participation in ancient societies. While further efforts are needed to address the underrepresentation of women in documentary heritage, this trend is a promising step forward.

At national and regional levels, **several operational initiatives support women heritage professionals, tradition bearers and practitioners**, from training and mentoring opportunities to research and conservation work. UNESCO's *World Heritage Mentorship Programme for African Professionals* delivered concrete results with gender parity: 40 professionals were trained comprising 20 women and 20 men in 2024. The programme, implemented through partnerships with the African World Heritage Fund, ICCROM, ICOMOS, and IUCN, specifically convened online meetings with women mentees to share experiences and provide targeted feedback that can help diversify the narratives formed around the communication of world heritage sites. This first-of-its-kind mentorship initiative positions African women heritage experts for leadership roles while creating collaborative cross-generational relationships between experienced and emerging professionals.

The exhibition "They Told the World About It" held at UNESCO in July 2025 honoured nearly 200 international women journalists who covered the Spanish civil war, offering a perspective rarely seen through stories from hospitals, refugee shelters and devastated towns which bring us closer to the everyday lives affected by war.

> ***These women journalists completed Spain's story but were forgotten. Today, we reclaim their memory as part of democratic remembrance.***
>
> ***Fernando Martínez***
> *Secretary of State for Democratic Memory*

© UNESCO/Bayastan Sabyrov

UNESCO facilitates training by the few remaining Ala Kiyiz artisans in Kyrgyzstan for the new generation, passing on skills for 'Ala Kiyiz,' felt carpet, listed as Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

2024-2025 IN REVIEW – FROM COMMITMENT TO IMPACT

In 2024-2025, UNESCO scaled up its actions to address harmful social norms across all regions by involving men and boys as allies through its flagship programmes and by integrating gender considerations into global standards addressing racism and discrimination. It continued to prioritize combating gender-based violence while significantly increasing its work to defend women journalists facing daily threats to their safety and freedom of expression as well as to develop new sports policies with special attention to the safety of women and girls. Economic inequalities were tackled through programmes to unlock career opportunities for women artists and cultural professionals at every stage of their working lives. Steps have also been taken to diversify narratives communicated through culture and the media and to recognize women's contributions to living and documentary heritage.

© Teddy Seguin

Underwater archaeology expert conducts fieldwork in Lake Titicaca with the support of UNESCO.

UNESCO'S 2024-2025 MONITORING DATA

- **19 countries** (2 in Africa, 2 SIDS) engaged in UNESCO's flagship programme to address **gender-based stereotypes and violence**, with the active engagement of men and boys
- **74 countries** (12 in Africa, 2 SIDS) promoted positive role models and fought **gender-based violence and stereotypes in sports** and physical education
- **30 countries** (5 in Africa, 3 SIDS) have developed policies aligned with the **Fit for Life framework**, with special attention to women and girls
- **29 countries** (26 in Africa) enhanced policies and programmes on safe learning environments free from school-related violence
- **26 journalism education institutions** empowered through high-quality and **gender-responsive journalism training programmes**
- **24 countries** (10 in Africa, 10 SIDS) have increased capacity to improve legislative and institutional frameworks related to **freedom of expression**, **access to information**, and **mainstreaming a gender-responsive approach**
- **35 countries** (10 in Africa, 8 SIDS) implemented the UN Plan of Action on the **Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity**, with particular attention to the safety of women journalists
- **76 countries** (22 in Africa, 8 SIDS) have implemented policies and programmes to **support inclusion** and gender equality in the culture and creative sectors

Results extracted and/or updated from selected gender-related indicators of UNESCO Programme and Budget 2024-2025 linked to Strategic Objective 3.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

4

BRIDGE THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE

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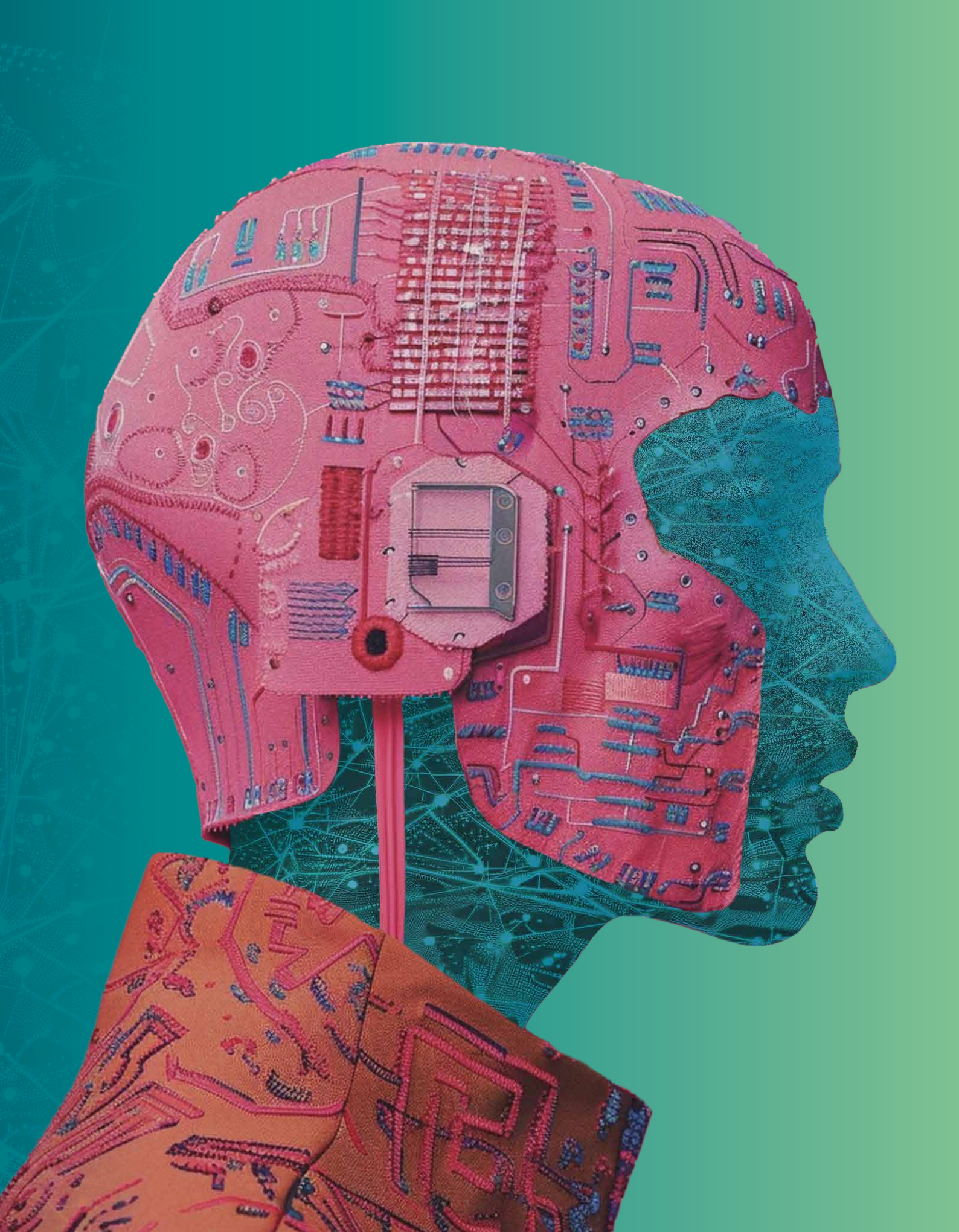


Technology is a tool. It promises easier access to education, science and culture. Yet, technology is not gender neutral. Algorithms reproduce and even amplify the gender biases of society, including through new forms of gender-based violence.

Audrey Azoulay

Director-General of UNESCO

UNESCO actively works to reduce the digital gender divide by empowering women and girls with digital, media and information literacy skills and competencies, ensuring equal access to information and empowering women through promoting gender equality in the development and use of digital technologies. This includes developing and implementing ethical standards and guidelines to address bias and barriers that may prevent girls' and women's full participation and leadership in the digital environment, including through Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Foster a technological environment in the service of humankind through the development and dissemination of knowledge and skills and the development of ethical standards

BRIDGE THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE

ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR AI & DIGITAL PLATFORMS

MEDIA & INFORMATION LITERACY

DIGITAL SKILLS & COMPETENCIES

5 GENDER EQUALITY

Contributing to SDG Target 5.b

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

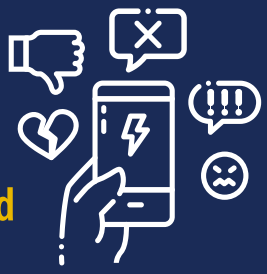
189 million

more men than women

use the Internet globally

(ITU, 2024)

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence



starts as early as age 9

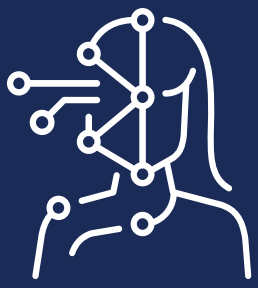
(UNFPA, 2024)

Men are **5 times** more likely than **women** to receive **online ads for high-paying executive jobs**

(UNESCO, 2024)

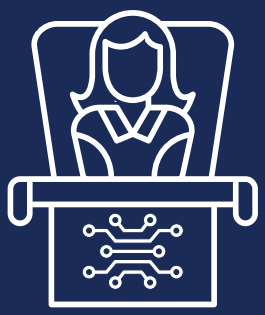
30% of **women journalists** surveyed responded that they **self-censor on social media**

(UNESCO, 2021)



30% of professionals **working in the AI sector** are **women** and they hold only **18% of C-suite positions** at AI startups

(UNESCO, 2024)



Only **8** of **the top 100 high-tech CEOs** are **women**

(UNESCO, 2024)

Women make up just

12% of **AI researchers**

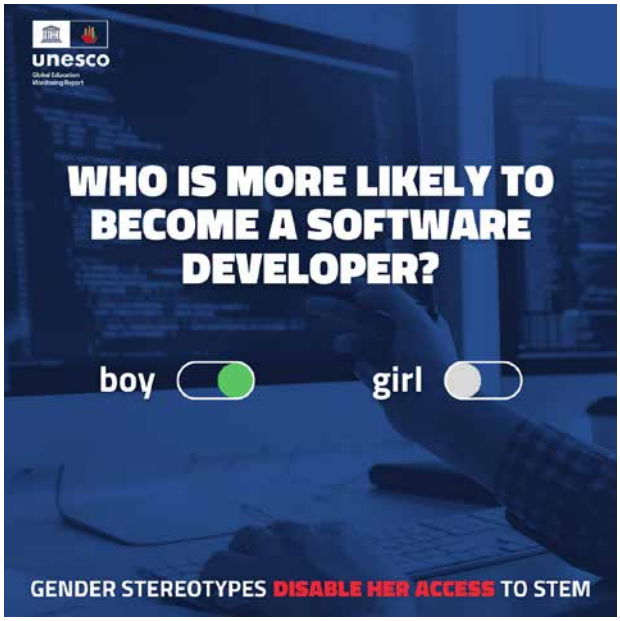
16% of **university professors conducting AI research**

(UNESCO, 2024)

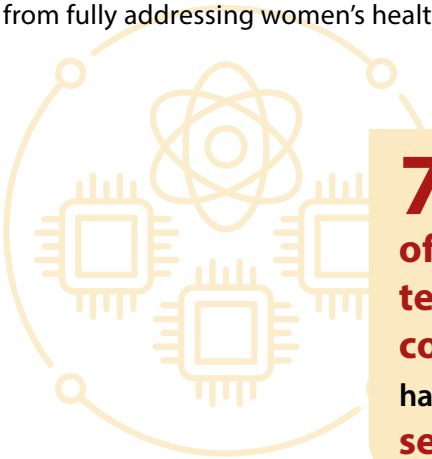
STATE OF THE WORLD: NEW DIGITAL FRONTIERS ARE GIVING RISE TO NEW CHALLENGES FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Technology is opening new frontiers once imagined only in science fiction. New generations of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications emerge almost daily and are profoundly reshaping how we live, work, learn, connect and relate to one another. Combined with neurotechnology, entire sectors from healthcare to education and economies are being turned on their head with new ethical and human rights implications that are amplified further by their rapid convergence and raise unexplored questions for gender equality.

A digital gender divide exists throughout the entire technology ecosystem from access to infrastructure and education in digital skills learning to leadership and scientific invention. Globally, 189 million more men than women use the Internet.[1] Women and girls also continue to lag behind in ICT and digital skills at a time when AI competencies are increasingly essential in the workforce. A clear illustration of this gap is the fact that women make up only 10 per cent of computer science graduates globally. Without targeted education and training, this digital divide leaves more women behind professionally and economically as women account for just 12 per cent of AI researchers, 6 per cent of software developers, and fewer than 2 per cent of applicants in the quantum sector.[2] Meanwhile, legal and data gaps leave technology-facilitated gender-based violence largely unaddressed, while low media, information and digital literacy skills increases the exposure of women and girls to harm.



The rapid transformations occurring in the **digital environment offer unprecedented opportunities to advance gender equality and empower women and girls. They also produce adverse outcomes that threaten their psychological well-being and physical safety**. For example, AI-driven tools are empowering women scientists and innovators, accelerating research and supporting data analysis, yet malicious actors using generative AI are infiltrating systems to embed biased content that have an impact on the careers of women scientists and their safety; 89 per cent of AI engineers report encountering generative AI hallucinations, including errors, biases or harmful content.[3] Neurotechnology, is another example, that has enabled the use of brain stimulators to manage chronic migraines, alleviate postpartum depression,[4] and ease menstrual pain[5] yet these early benefits fall short of their full potential for women. Systemic exclusion from research and clinical trials, where female biology is often overlooked, continues to distort data, limit treatment outcomes, and prevent neurotechnology from fully addressing women's health needs.[6]



79% **of quantum technology companies** have **no female senior leaders**

These **inequalities do not just reflect existing biases; they influence the development and use of the technologies themselves**. AI systems have been shown to encode and amplify gender bias. Recruitment algorithms favor male applicants, while voice and facial recognition tools perform less accurately for women, especially those from racialized groups. Biases are also evident in search and recommendation algorithms. Searching for the term "Black girls" has, in documented cases, led to the display of sexually explicit content, while automated systems tend to associate women with shopping and men with shooting.[7] Large language models (LLMs) can perpetuate deeply embedded gender norms and harmful stereotypes and bias: UNESCO's recent research revealed that they associate female names with domestic roles such as "home," "family," and "children," while linking male names with professional achievements like "business," "executive," and "salary". In addition, on average, the two tested LLMs conveyed negative portrayals of LGTBQ+ persons in approximately 65 per cent of the content produced.[8] In critical sectors like finance and healthcare, these biases translate into discriminatory outcomes, impacting credit, insurance, and medical decisions.

On average, **young women** have **75%** of the **programming skills** that **young men** do

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GEN AI) also amplifies harmful content by automating and enabling malicious actors to create images, audio, text and video with amazing speed and scale. This includes the production of everything from fabricated biographies to modified and photorealistic images that portray mostly women and girls in non-consenting scenarios. It is now estimated that some girls experience their first technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) at just 9 years old.[9] These developments have extensive impact beyond the virtual world, including enduring physical, psychological, social and economic effects that lead to the withdrawal of women and girls from public life and their participation in communities.[10]

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, at the 2nd Global Forum on the Ethics of AI in Slovenia.

© Ministrstvo za digitalno preobrazbo, Slovenia

The **digital gender divide must be addressed through intersectional, inclusive, and locally grounded strategies** that consider the full range of structural inequalities, related to, for example, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and other factors shaped by specific social and geopolitical contexts. In certain regions, rural women may face limited connectivity. Indigenous women's digital exclusion threatens the preservation of their languages and knowledge.[11] Meanwhile, women with disabilities encounter persistent accessibility barriers that limit their autonomy and participation.[12] Older women also face major digital gaps. In the European Union, only 50 per cent as many women aged 55 to 74 have basic digital skills compared to men and younger women.[13] Economic hardship, unpaid care work, lack of access to electricity or clean water, further restrict digital access for women.

In response to all of these challenges, the international community adopted global and country specific frameworks to foster equality in the development and deployment of digital and new frontier technologies. Implementation, however, remains inconsistent. According to the Global Index on Responsible AI, **only 24 of 138 countries include gender in their national AI strategies, and only 18 make substantive references to gender issues in relation to AI governance and development.**[14] Even when gender is mentioned, they often lack concrete implementation plans, dedicated budgets, or accountability mechanisms. This policy gap is a critical missed opportunity to create the guardrails necessary for inclusive innovation and prevent bias from being embedded at scale.

32% of teenage girls said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel worse

Beyond policy frameworks, addressing the digital gender divide **requires sustained efforts to reinforce inclusive media and information literacy (MIL) and digital competencies** while simultaneously creating viable pathways to leadership in technology sectors. Educational initiatives are required to actively counter harmful stereotypes, such as the damaging myth that programming and technical fields are "for boys," by providing girls and women with visible role models, mentorship opportunities, and supportive learning environments in STEM fields. Individuals also urgently need the skills not just to consume content, but to critically evaluate, challenge, and shape it. MIL empowers users to understand how digital tools function, recognise misinformation, assert control over personal data, and make informed decisions about their online engagement. It equips people to navigate digital spaces purposefully, not passively. Such MIL strategies need to be gender-responsive, as the ways people experience and engage with technology and their applications differ significantly.

Despite the scale and complexity of the challenges, the power of technology to advance gender equality is real and within reach. It requires coordinated, multistakeholder action involving content creators, digital platform companies, governments, media, civil society organizations, educational institutions, individual users and influencers. Thoughtfully designed AI can reduce biases, support gender-sensitive content, and give a stronger voice to diverse groups in media, education, culture, science and public life. New opportunities in digital and new frontier technology fields can lead to economic empowerment, and active participation for everyone. As all of the recent UNESCO reports show, when women and girls are supported as creators, leaders, and responsible innovators, the whole digital world benefits.

UNESCO PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

Recognizing the growing urgency of the digital gender divide, UNESCO has taken a leading role in advancing gender equality in digital transformation, by focusing on:

- Ensuring the implementation of ethical and human rights standards that reflect women and girls' needs, skills, and risks;
- Promoting media and information literacy to equip citizens with the skills necessary to navigate a rapidly changing information landscape and to challenge gender bias; and
- Empowering the participation of women and girls with digital skills and competencies.

In 2024–2025, UNESCO worked to generate new knowledge and collect comprehensive data to inform policies. It advanced the implementation of ethical frameworks and mechanisms at the country level and supported women's leadership in technology governance at all decision-making levels. It also partnered with its extensive network of education and media institutions to make sure that women and girls are not only equipped with digital skills but also with the competencies to be active and responsible digital citizens through media and information literacy programmes.

Ethical and human rights standards for AI & digital platforms

UNESCO continues to assert its leadership role as a global institution that promotes human rights, ethical standards, and diversity in the rapidly evolving digital and technological environment.

At the core of this work is UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. Adopted by 194 Member States in 2021, it is the first global standard-setting instrument addressing AI ethics with a strong gender lens. The influence of this Recommendation, which calls for embedding gender equality in AI design, data governance, and access, tackling biases and promoting diversity, notably grew in 2024–2025, moving from global standard setting instrument to policy and practice.

> ***Companies are trying to make products that are for everybody, but if you look at the demographics of who is in the room, it's a very small slice of the world. If we have only one type of person, gender, geographical region or educational background represented, we're missing out on a diversity of knowledge and information.***
>
> ***Dr. Rumman Chowdhury***
> *CEO and founder of Humane Intelligence*

A key milestone was Second and Third Global Forums on AI Ethics, hosted by Slovenia in 2024 and Thailand in 2025. Both encouraged the use of UNESCO's *Readiness Assessment Methodology* (RAM),[15] – a diagnostic tool to evaluate national capacities in AI infrastructure, governance, and social policy – and promoted recommendations on gender equality in science and technology, with concrete action-oriented contributions from the *Women4Ethical AI Platform*.[16] Launched in 2023 and expanded throughout 2024–2025 to include leading women experts, the platform helped foster multi-stakeholder engagement in 36 countries. It produced the *Women for Ethical AI: Outlook Study on Artificial Intelligence and Gender* (2024), developed jointly with UNESCO. The study is grounded in the Recommendation's gender chapter and informed by RAM assessments. It provides **practical guidance to integrate gender equality across the AI lifecycle**, emphasizing the need for disaggregated data, inclusive policymaking, and women's leadership in shaping ethical AI systems.

Throughout the Biennium, UNESCO continued to implement the *Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms* (2023) which aim at upholding freedom of expression and the right to information while tackling disinformation, hate speech and conspiracy theories online. They serve as a key normative tool informing UNESCO's capacity-building initiatives, offer a comprehensive framework for stakeholders to promote human rights-centered governance of digital platforms and ensure the accountability for both governments and digital platforms.

Additionally, the *Guidelines* feature provisions specifically designed to **protect the rights of women and girls, while providing detailed recommendations for digital platforms**, emphasizing the need for diverse, gender-sensitive and intersectional approaches.

Complementary to these efforts, is the implementation of the *Internet Universality Indicators* (IUI),[17] another evidence-based tool to support Member States in promoting gender-responsive digital ecosystems. Built around the ROAM principles – Rights, Openness, Accessibility, and Multi-stakeholder participation – and including cross-cutting indicators on gender equality, the IUI **assess whether women and girls have equal access to and use of digital services**, including online banking and e-government, and whether information critical to their rights, such as on reproductive and sexual health, is readily accessible. They also examine the extent to which national strategies protect women and girls from online gender-based violence. In 2024–2025, eight countries applied the IUI to evaluate and enhance their national Internet policies, helping to bridge the digital gender divide through more inclusive and ethical digital transformation.

Within UNESCO's *Information for All Programme* (IFAP), in partnership with the Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP), a webinar on "Gender Transformative Policy to Advance Digital Inclusion" was held. It concluded with a call to action for gender-inclusive policies and launched the Internet Governance Forum *Dynamic Coalition on Measuring Digital Inclusion*, uniting over thirty institutions from academia, government, NGOs, and the private sector to collaborate on advancing digital inclusion. Since its launch, the coalition has driven critical policy discussions at major global fora focusing on **meaningful connectivity, digital governance, and the monitoring of inclusion through a gender lens**. The coalition's holistic approach addresses emerging technologies such as AI and quantum computing while prioritizing gender inclusion and evidence-based policymaking to ensure an equitable digital transformation. In 2024, the IFAP Secretariat also contributed key insights on gender issues to the development of *UNESCO's Caribbean Artificial Intelligence Policy Roadmap* and the *African Union's Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy*, thereby advancing regional AI policy and fostering inclusive technological development across diverse contexts.

In addition to regional policy support, UNESCO's **advocacy initiatives showcased the real-world application of ethical principles in AI while contributing to building national and institutional expertise**. In China, the Seminar on "AI-Powered Accessibility: Redefining Digital Inclusion" explored how AI can eliminate gender-specific barriers. At EuroDIG 2024, UNESCO facilitated key discussions on digital gender gaps and the need for better data on women's meaningful connectivity. In Africa, a series of four webinars on "Gender Perspectives on AI and the Rule of Law", co-organized with the Lawyers Hub, examined the impact of AI on legal systems and human rights, with a focus on gender-sensitive governance. Engagement with the judiciary expanded this agenda further at the global level through the webinar "AI in the Courtroom – Women Judges Pioneering Technology for Justice", which marked the International Day of Women Judges 2025.

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UNESCO supported 150 women entrepreneurs from 28 African countries, building digital and AI skills, incubating 30 initiatives, and fostering a Pan-African network for gender equality in AI.

Complementing these efforts, the Global Digital Inclusion Partnership (GDIP) conducted a survey involving over 6,000 women in India, Mozambique, Nigeria, and the Philippines, revealing the significant impact of the digital divide on women and emphasizing the urgent need for meaningful connectivity through affordable access, high-speed internet, suitable devices, and regular use in a supportive environment. In the Caribbean, UNESCO also launched a survey – supported by interviews and focus groups – to explore gender discrimination by AI. Drawing on the survey results and an audit of a Large Language Model, a comprehensive policy brief is being developed, and over 240 participants received training in ethical and gender-responsive AI.

To further inform inclusive, ethical and rights-based digital policies, UNESCO produced a **growing body of evidence on the intersection of gender and generative AI**. Key reports launched this biennium include *Your Opinion Doesn't Matter, Anyway* (2024), which highlights how generative AI amplifies technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), disproportionately affecting women and girls. *Challenging Systematic Prejudices: An Investigation into Bias Against Women and Girls in Large Language Models* (2024), sheds light on the pervasive gender biases embedded in LLMs, calling for ongoing research, policy reform, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. At a regional level, the *Needs Assessment for Artificial Intelligence, Digital Transformation and Open Data for Small Island Developing States* (2024) examines AI and data ecosystems in SIDS as a basis for digital transformation, finding that nearly half of the 28 responding countries require UNESCO's support to mainstream gender in AI.

UNESCO is also **expanding its ethical framework into emerging scientific fields**. In the quantum sector, UNESCO is leading the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology (2025), focused on promoting gender equality in STEM and building capacity in the Global South. In partnership with IBM and the Unitary Foundation, UNESCO launched a *Global Survey on Quantum Science and Technology* in 2025 to map the global quantum research ecosystem. The first results have already revealed persistent gender imbalances and identified future actions like mentorship and inclusive policy design as priorities.[18]

In the field of neurotechnology, UNESCO is taking a global leadership role to ensure that these powerful innovations develop in ways that respect human rights and dignity and will address the challenges and needs of women. The first global Recommendation on the Ethics of Neurotechnology,[19] recognizes gender equality as a fundamental pillar. It calls on Member States to collect sex-disaggregated data, to engage in gender-responsive design, safe and inclusive workplaces as well as to introduce mentorship and leadership development programmes. Together, these initiatives reflect UNESCO's holistic approach to embedding gender equality in the governance of ethics AI, digital platforms and technology, bridging global standards with action.

Box 1

Red Teaming Artificial Intelligence for Social Good – The Playbook

UNESCO, in partnership with Humane Intelligence, marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2024 by conducting an innovative Red Teaming exercise – Testing AI for Gender Bias – through a two-part session with UNESCO Ambassadors and staff. This methodology applies rigorous evaluation frameworks to identify and mitigate gender bias in AI systems before deployment.

Inspired by this practical exercise UNESCO published *Red Teaming Artificial Intelligence for Social Good, the Playbook* (2025), a step-by-step guide to help policymakers, researchers, and civil society organizations identify and address gender bias and technology-facilitated gender-based violence in AI systems. Designed to be accessible to both technical and non-technical audiences, it offers methodologies to test AI models and mitigate risks, thereby contributing to the development of ethical and inclusive technologies.

UNESCO Ambassadors and Permanent Delegates taking part in the Red Teaming exercise on 25 November 2024.

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Media and Information Literacy

UNESCO supports the development of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and Digital Competencies to enable everyone to engage critically with information, navigate the online environment safely, and help build trust in the information ecosystem and in digital technologies. It provides a set of essential skills to address the challenges of the 21st century including the proliferation of mis- and disinformation and hate speech, the decline of trust in media and digital innovations resulting notably from AI. UNESCO's approach to MIL strategically positions women and girls at the heart of its work from high-level policy dialogue to grassroots implementation.

At the policy level, UNESCO is supporting 34 countries to **develop national Media and Information Literacy policies and capacity-building strategies that are gender responsive**. For example, it led a high-level consultation session in Pakistan in 2024 that marked a significant step toward developing the country's first National MIL Strategy with a specific focus on gender equality. This new strategy is aligned with Pakistan's Digital Gender Inclusion Strategy (2022) to increase women's participation in digital transformation and was part of the launch of Digital Pakistan (2024), which includes six technical priorities including women's digital literacy and inclusion.

Recognizing the influential role of digital content creators in shaping online narratives, UNESCO's work has focused on equipping them with tools to counter hate speech, discrimination, and gender bias to ensure they contribute to safer, more inclusive online environments. UNESCO partnered with the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas to launch the online course *How to Be a Trusted Voice Online* that has already engaged over 10,500 influencers and digital content creators from 165 countries. Particular emphasis was placed on countering gender stereotypes and promoting inclusive digital spaces.

Throughout the biennium, **UNESCO worked to adapt its global vision and capacity building tools to diverse regional and local needs and realities**. For instance, in the Caribbean, the *Building the Caribbean's Next Generation of Media Literate Citizens* programme created new pathways for gender-inclusive participation in media spaces, addressing the unique challenges faced by women and girls in the region to critically engage with digital content while providing tailored resources to combat misinformation and to participate safely online. To date, 400 school children and 80 educators and journalists participated from Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago.

At the same time, the programme tackled a critical gender issue affecting boys in the Caribbean: disengagement from education, low attainment levels, and increased vulnerability to negative influences. Recognizing this challenge, the project intentionally **designed and delivered media literacy education in ways that attract and retain boys**, making learning interactive, engaging and relevant to their experiences.

In Myanmar, the project *Preventing Hate Speech and Promoting Peaceful Society through Media and Information Literacy (MIL)* dedicated 31 per cent of its budget to gender equality and notably included the training of women to serve as mediators on Collaborative Dispute Resolution panels thus elevating their role in their communities and contributing to peace building efforts.

In Nepal, efforts focused on strengthening digital safety for women journalists and combat technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), particularly within marginalized communities. Training sessions on responsible online practices were conducted, and an awareness campaign on TFGBV was launched with the support of local content creators.

A regional platform was also set up in Argentina with Microsoft to share best practices and resources on digital citizenship education with strong gender equality components. This network enables educators and policymakers to implement digital literacy programmes sensitive to gender-specific needs and challenges, recognizing that sustainable change requires both individual capacity building and systemic transformation of educational environments.

Box 2

Social Media for Peace and Gender-Responsive MIL

Launched in 2021 with pilot activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Indonesia, and Kenya, UNESCO's *Social Media 4 Peace (SM4P)* initiative promotes safer, more inclusive digital spaces by addressing disinformation, hate speech, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

At the 2024 Digital Rights and Inclusion Forum (DRIF) in Accra, Ghana, *SM4P* led a high-level panel on tackling gendered disinformation, highlighting strategies to build community resilience. Insights from Kenya were shared, where 25 content creators and influencers were trained to use their platforms for digital peacebuilding during the "Influence 4 Impact" workshop.

Additionally, the project established the National Multistakeholder Coalition on Freedom of Expression and Content Moderation in Kenya (FECoMo), that identified gendered disinformation and hate speech online as one of their key areas of advocacy, endorsing a joint resolution for a multisectoral approach and action to address gendered disinformation and hate speech on digital platforms in the country. The resolution was a product of a three-day extensive workshop aiming to conceptualize and formulate innovative strategies for possible solutions on these pressing challenges, including promoting and integrating gender-responsive MIL empowerment on digital platforms.

Building on these successes, UNESCO launched a second phase of *SM4P* in 2025 and funded by the European Union, expanding the initiative to Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, and South Africa, further advancing gender-transformative Media and Information Literacy in diverse contexts and regions.

> ***Social media platforms play a powerful role in our society: while they can unite and build peace, they can also trigger tensions. The project brings together people from various regions and sectors and addresses important issues like marginalized communities, interethnic relations, and gender-based violence.***
>
> ***Muhayo Abduraupova***
> *Representative of the Positive Dialogue Public Organization based in Osh, Kyrgyzstan*

The **integration of Media and Information Literacy within media institutions** represents another critical dimension of UNESCO's strategy. Throughout 2024, over 860 media organizations from more than 30 countries participated in UNESCO-led consultations and training sessions on how to integrate Media and Information Literacy strategies in their daily work. This engagement has already yielded concrete results, with media organizations in Central Asia and the Federation of African Journalists initiating regional partnerships. UNESCO also recognizes the critical role of community media in underserved areas such as in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs). UNESCO promoted gender mainstreaming in community media through mentoring, funding, and low-tech tools. This targeted support acknowledges that community media serves a vital lifeline for women in remote and underserved areas, providing both access to information and platforms for meaningful participation.

Through this multi-faceted approach – spanning from global awareness campaigns to local capacity building, from policy development to addressing online safety – UNESCO supports a comprehensive understanding of the complex barriers women face in the digital age and works with its partners toward a future where women and girls are empowered to navigate, create, and transform digital information ecosystems.

© Ministerio de Educación, Deporte y Cultura del Ecuador

UNESCO and Ecuador's Ministry of Education co-hosted the International Forum on Digital Citizenship 2025 in Quito, promoting inclusive digital education against AI-related threats and TFGBV.

Box 3

UNESCO Amplifies Women's Voices Against Digital Hate Speech In Kyrgyzstan

As part of UNESCO's comprehensive strategy to counter hate speech through education and Media and Information Literacy, UNESCO launched a targeted initiative in Kyrgyzstan to promote safer digital spaces for women. Central to this effort is a YouTube video series featuring four women activists: Asel Sooronbaeva, Editor-in-Chief of Checkit Media; Atyr Abdrakhmatova, former Ombudsperson; Klara Sooronkulova, politician; and Orazaiym Narmatova, social activist. Through personal testimonies, they shed light on the prevalence of digital harassment and gender-based discrimination in the country, where nearly half the population, 2.95 million people, actively use social media platforms.

By documenting these experiences, UNESCO not only raised awareness of the challenges faced by women but also provided tangible examples of resistance and resilience. The project's significance extends beyond Kyrgyzstan's borders, contributing to global efforts to protect vulnerable groups in digital spaces. As hate speech proliferates across social media platforms worldwide, UNESCO's work demonstrates the power of storytelling in building effective responses.

> ***It's not just about training media to give women a voice, it's about training women to have the confidence and tools to use that voice.***
>
> ***Participant in the session "Breaking Barriers: Gender, Media, and the Digital Age",*** *World Press Freedom Day 2025, Arusha, Tanzania*

Digital skills & competencies

UNESCO has taken decisive action to address gender gaps in digital skills and competencies through strategic initiatives that recognize both the urgency of the challenge and the transformative potential of equipping women and girls with technological capabilities to bridge the digital gender divide.

The **production of new knowledge** remained a priority and UNESCO maintained its leadership role to influence the international agenda through this evidence base. UNESCO's report *Technology on Her Terms* (2024) details the role of technology in replicating and amplifying gender biases in education. It urges governments to assess how technology design may compromise safe learning environments and reinforce harmful gender stereotypes. The results were at the core of UNESCO's global advocacy during the International Day for Digital Learning that brought together over 700 policymakers, teachers, students and education leaders from 114 countries to explore how digital learning can foster equity and equality in low-resource contexts.

Ensuring that technology is effectively used as a tool to promote easier access to education and enrich learning experiences for all, UNESCO reinforced its **actions at the regional and country levels to provide digital skills learning for women and girls**, particularly in Africa through its new partnership with the Beijing Normal University to close the digital divide for women and girls in Tanzania. In Kenya, UNESCO launched the *DigiKen* initiative with the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), UN Women, and UNEP. The result was the creation of 15 Digital Innovation Hubs to provide women, girls, youth, and marginalized communities, with digital skills to access economic opportunities and to fully participate in the digital economy.

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UNESCO tracks reforms in the digital transformation of education systems aimed at providing digital skills for women and girls across the Maghreb.

It also supported women-led enterprises through tailored training, mentoring, and access to finance, enabling them to grow their businesses and strengthen their economic autonomy. The Hubs also tackled issues of technology-facilitated gender-based violence by providing training in digital safety, cybersecurity, and online rights.

Recognizing the **key role that women teachers play as role models and change agents**, specialised trainings were organized for women teachers to strengthen their ICT and digital skills. Gender-responsive pedagogies in line with the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers were introduced in 13 countries that encouraged girls to pursue technology-related fields.

> ***Kenya's Digital Innovation Hubs are crucial for the country's economic future. Investing in them empowers youth and women with digital skills fueling innovation, and inclusive growth as part of Kenya's key vision 2030.***
>
> ***Eng. John Tanui***
>
> *MBS, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Information, Communication and Digital Economy*

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Young women engineers and architects engage in UNESCO's training on seismic- and cyclone-resistant construction and 3D printing in Haiti.

Taken together, these interconnected initiatives across research, advocacy, policy, education, and capacity-building, demonstrate how UNESCO's mandate translates into tangible improvements in the lives of women and girls. By addressing digital competencies at every level – from basic literacy to leadership – UNESCO ensures that women and girls become not merely beneficiaries but active architects of the digital future.

Box 4

Game Jams for Gender Equality in Argentina

The video game industry is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the creative economy, yet it remains heavily male-dominated. In Argentina, women represent only 23 per cent of the salaried workforce and 27 per cent of leadership roles in the sector. To help bridge this gender gap, UNESCO and the Federal Investment Council (CFI) launched the programme *Women Developers: Bridging the Gap, Work and Training in the World of Video Games.*

Among its flagship activities were the *Game Jams*, collaborative competitions in which participants create video game prototypes within a short time frame. Across Córdoba, Tucumán, Tierra del Fuego, La Pampa and Salta and online platforms, more than 600 people took part in the programme's activities, including virtual training camps on no-code and low-code game development, technical English courses, and mentoring sessions with women leaders in the field. Participants also visited Globant's offices – a software development company – for hands-on workshops and pitching practice and attended the Argentina Video Game Expo (EVA), where gender issues and stereotypes in gaming were addressed in a high-level panel.

© UNESCO/Bryan Cereijo

Participants during a Game Jam in Cordoba, part of UNESCO and CFI's Women Developers programme to bridge the gender gap in the video game industry.

Box 5

Building Digital Skills for Girls in the Philippines

Digital competencies are essential for meaningful participation in today's workforce and society. In August 2024, nearly 100 girls enrolled in the *Alternative Learning System (ALS)* initiative in Manila participated in a focused two-week course to develop their computer and ICT skills including training on basic computer operations, software applications, internet and email use, as well as online safety and security.

This initiative is part of UNESCO's ongoing project, *Better Life for Out-of-School Girls to Fight Against Poverty and Injustice* in the Philippines, which has been working with out-of-school girls since 2017.

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The Better Life for Out-of-School Girls to Fight Against Poverty and Injustice project in the Philippines equips out-of-school girls with essential ICT competencies.

2024-2025 IN REVIEW – FROM COMMITMENT TO IMPACT

In the rapidly evolving technological landscape, UNESCO's comprehensive approach continues to ensure that ethical principles, human rights and gender equality remain at the forefront of digital transformation worldwide, while creating the foundation for a more inclusive technological ecosystem, where women's leadership and participation are not exceptions but expectations, shaping innovations that serve all of humanity.

The results show a significant increase in the support UNESCO provided to countries to implement the 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence into their national policies and regulatory frameworks, reaching an additional 36 countries over the previous biennium. There was also a higher number of countries engaged in the *Women and AI Flagship initiative* and its policy network as well as in Media and Information Literacy initiatives that provide women and girls with the critical capacities and tools to navigate the new technological frontiers and spaces safely and as active digital content creators.

UNESCO'S 2024-2025 MONITORING DATA

- **42 countries** (13 in Africa, 1 SIDS) have increased capacity for the development and use of **digital technologies and AI that support gender equality**
- **76 countries** (28 in Africa, 9 SIDS) implemented **AI ethics approaches** through national policy and regulatory frameworks, with particular **emphasis on diversity and gender equality**
- **36 countries** (5 in Africa, 3 SIDS) engaged in the **Women and AI Flagship initiative** and its policy network
- **8 countries** (2 in Africa, 6 SIDS) assessed and enhanced their Internet policies and digital ecosystems by **applying the Internet Universality Indicators**, which include a cross-cutting set of **gender-related indicators**
- **31 countries** (9 in Africa, 3 SIDS) provided **quality-assured training programmes on digital or AI competencies** to ensure more inclusive learning
- **34 countries** (15 in Africa, 2 SIDS) developed and implemented **MIL policies and capacity-building strategies**

Results extracted from selected gender-related indicators of UNESCO Programme and Budget 2024-2025 linked to Strategic Objective 4.

CROSS-CUTTING THEME

WOMEN AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS, EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND EARLY RECOVERY

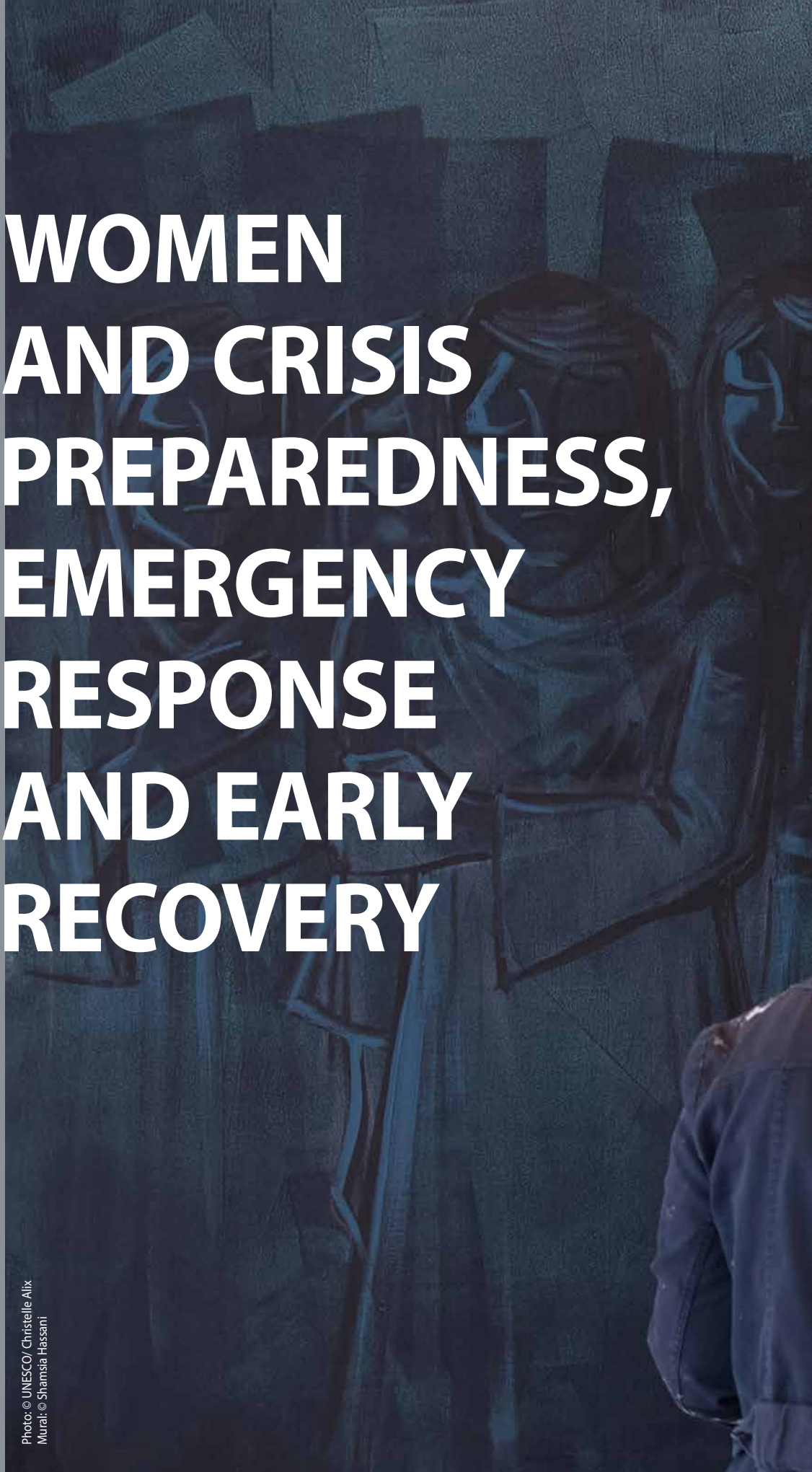


Photo: © UNESCO/ Christelle Alix
Mural: © Shamsia Hassani

UNESCO's recent achievements are evidence of its unique ability to mobilize and unite, even in times of crisis. We firmly believe that peace can be built through education, science, culture, communication and information. When we unite around shared values such as gender equality, we can produce tangible and lasting results on the ground.

Audrey Azoulay

Director-General of UNESCO

UNESCO leverages its expertise to address crisis preparedness, emergency response, and early recovery efforts, with a strong commitment to advancing gender equality at all levels. It delivers direct support to women and girls affected by conflict, emergencies, and crises by promoting continuity of learning, ensuring access to gender-responsive quality education, and creating safe learning environments. Additionally, UNESCO protects and amplifies the voices and rights of women journalists, artists, and scientists; supports women's leadership in early recovery efforts and facilitates women's engagement in preventing violent extremism and disaster risk reduction.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

In 2024, **676 million women and girls** lived within 50 km of a **deadly conflict event**, the highest number since 1990s

(UN Women, 2025)

54% of out-of-school girls worldwide live in **crisis-affected regions**

(INEE, 2021)

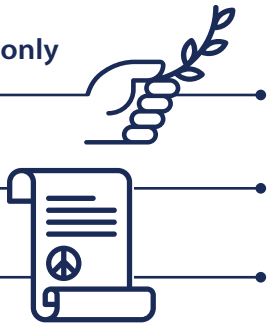
In 2023 **women** were only

9.6% of peace negotiators

14% of mediators

27% of signatories

(UN Women, 2025)



Women are **14 times more likely to die** in the aftermath of a **natural disaster**

(UNICEF, 2023)

4,500 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were reported worldwide with **92% of survivors** being **women and girls**

(UN Women, 2025)

In 2024, **90% of women's crisis aid organizations** were hit by **funding cuts**

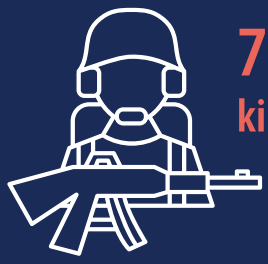
(UN Women, 2024)

81% of women journalists surveyed in **Ukraine** faced **online abuse**

(UNESCO, 2025)

2.2 million girls remain **banned from secondary education** in **Afghanistan**

(UNESCO, 2025)



7 in 10 women killed in conflicts worldwide died in **Gaza**

(UNHCR, 2025)

Iraqi officers unit dedicated to address **online threats** against **women journalists** addressed over **2,600 cases** since 2021

(UNESCO, 2024)

STATE OF THE WORLD: UNPRECEDENT ESCALATION OF CRISES AND CONFLICTS REQUIRES WOMEN LEADERS

Armed conflicts have reached their highest level since 1946. In 2024, approximately 676 million women lived within 50 kilometres of a deadly conflict, a devastating 50 per cent increase from just a decade ago.[1] This proximity to violence translates into profound disruptions to their fundamental rights, safety, education and livelihoods.

Statistics paint a stark picture: one in two women and girls in conflict-affected settings face food insecurity,[2] 61 per cent of preventable maternal mortality occurs in 37 crisis-affected countries.[3] In Ukraine alone, 8 million women and girls require humanitarian assistance.[4] In Gaza, more than 28,000 women and girls have been killed since October 2023; one woman and one girl every hour.[5]

Within this landscape, **women and girls face record levels of conflict-related sexual violence**. In 2024, 92 per cent of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence were women and girls.[6] In South Sudan, women and girls are abducted and violated when returning home to gather food for displaced families.[7] In Ukraine, as of December 2024, 335 cases of conflict-related sexual violence have been documented. Domestic violence has also surged, with reports indicating a 36 per cent increase compared to pre-war levels.[8]

Crises and emergencies severely disrupt education, inflicting profound and long-lasting consequences on generations of women and girls. 54 per cent of out-of-school girls globally reside in crisis-affected regions, twice the global average, and twice as likely to be out of school than boys.[9] The most striking example remains Afghanistan, where almost 2.2 million girls remain banned from secondary education, making it the world's only country with such extreme legislative restrictions. These measures extend far beyond education. Women are prohibited from working in most sectors, restricted in their movement, and silenced. The psychological toll is devastating; 82 per cent of Afghan women surveyed in early 2024 reported their mental health as bad or very bad, with 8 per cent knowing at least one woman who had attempted suicide since August 2021.[10]

The targeting of women human rights defenders, journalists, artists, and scientists has also intensified dramatically across crisis zones. They are targeted through harassment, censorship, detention, and gender-based violence, aiming to silence their voices and exclude them from public and peacebuilding roles. These attacks are both punitive and strategic, reinforcing broader patterns of gender exclusion and repression. During this biennium, killings of women journalists were recorded in countries such as Palestine, Syria, Ukraine, Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan.

The intersection of climate change with conflict creates additional vulnerabilities. **Climate emergencies are never gender neutral.** The degradation of the planet's natural systems has a disproportionate effect on women and girls and climate extremes exacerbate existing inequalities and power dynamics reinforcing harmful gender norms and stereotypes. As many as 80 per cent of those displaced by climate change and natural disasters are women and girls.[11] They are also 14 times more likely to die in the aftermath of a natural disaster.[12] Furthermore, the polarization created by the climate crisis, accompanied by disinformation and misinformation, have led to a decline in trust in science and the media, which in turn has exacerbated harassment and violence experienced by women scientists, artists and journalists engaged in environmental action.

Ukrainian women assume unprecedent **leadership roles**: **67,000** serve in the **Armed Forces** (with **5,000** in combat roles), they comprise over **20%** of **parliament members** and hold key cabinet positions

While **normative frameworks to increase access for women to participate in peace processes** have strengthened markedly over the past two decades, especially with the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 and its nine subsequent resolutions, practical implementation has plateaued. In 2023, women comprised only 10 per cent of negotiators in peace processes, 14 per cent of mediators, and 27 per cent of signatories to peace agreements.[13] This persistent exclusion occurs despite compelling evidence that women's participation strengthens peace agreements and increases their likelihood of lasting success. In addition, research consistently shows that countries with greater gender equality before the conflict arises are more likely to resolve conflicts without violence.[14]

113 countries have a **National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security** in 2025, compared to only 19 in 2010

Women's rights organizations provide critical frontline humanitarian response, reaching communities that formal aid systems cannot access. In Colombia, for instance, women's organizations actively engage in peace consolidation efforts, shaping high-level advocacy and ensuring the inclusion of women ex-combatants in demobilization programmes. In Yemen, local women's groups have established consultation mechanisms that prioritize grassroot voices in peace discussions. Despite their essential role, a recent UN Women survey reports that 90 per cent of women's organizations aiding women in crises have already been hit by funding cuts resulting in an additional and alarming threat to women's rights and gender equality in crisis and emergency contexts.[15]

Half of women's organisations working in **crisis contexts** may shut down in 2025 due to **global humanitarian aid reductions**

As the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) reached its 25th anniversary in 2025, **the international community is at a critical juncture**. The compounding crises of armed conflict, climate change, and democratic regression demand urgent action. Yet within these challenges lies the opportunity to reimagine peace processes that genuinely include women's voices, to rebuild societies on foundations of equality, and to harness women's leadership in creating sustainable solutions.

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Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, with school children at Al-Nouri Mosque in Mosul.

UNESCO PROVIDES SOLUTIONS

UNESCO's unique mandate, as well as its founding principles and values, positions it as a key and strategic actor in providing solutions to crises, emergencies and conflicts. Its work to promote gender equality and the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is vital in areas of education, sciences, culture, communication and information, fields that are often overlooked in the prevention, response, and early recovery actions.

More specifically, UNESCO works to:

- Promote continuity of learning, access to gender-responsive quality education and safe learning environments;
- Protect and amplify the voices and rights of women journalists, artists and scientists;
- Support the participation of women in early recovery actions for the reconstruction of educational and cultural infrastructures and cultural heritage;
- Facilitate women's participation in preventing violent extremism (PVE) and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

Within these areas of action, UNESCO concentrates on driving global advocacy; generating, analysing, and sharing data and knowledge; developing formal and informal learning and training opportunities; and delivering direct support to women and girls affected by conflict, emergencies, and crises. A key element of UNESCO's approach is the innovative use of advanced technologies and artificial intelligence to design effective solutions, particularly within disaster risk reduction efforts.

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In Gaza, UNESCO and the Basma Society use puppetry to support children affected by conflict.

Promoting continuity of learning, access to gender-responsive quality education and safe learning environments

Education serves as both a foundation for peacebuilding and a critical tool for the empowerment of women and girls in crisis-affected contexts which disproportionately disrupt their lives. During the 2024-2025 biennium, **UNESCO's comprehensive approach addressed systemic barriers of access to education while strengthening the resilience of educational systems in fragile settings**. Significant progress was achieved across 25 conflict-affected contexts, with 28 countries advancing policy frameworks to strengthen access to education for marginalized populations.

In 2025, UNESCO's *Banned from Education* report, revealed the critical challenges in securing safe and quality education for women and girls. Afghanistan represents the most severe case, where girls have been denied secondary education since 2021.
In response, UNESCO deployed community-based literacy programmes that served 55,000 learners, with 68 per cent being women and girls. These programmes used tailored modules adapted into video and audio formats to circumvent mobility restrictions. Moreover, UNESCO's partnership with the Begum Organization for Women provided educational radio broadcasts to more than 156,000 learners with core secondary curriculum content, expanding its reach to 5.9 million listeners across all 34 provinces – 63 per cent women and girls. In addition to educational broadcasts, the station also provided mental health support, and financial literacy classes. UNESCO also enabled 432 women university students to complete their bachelor degrees and obtain internationally recognized qualifications.

Similar crisis-responsive strategies were implemented across diverse contexts. In Ukraine, UNESCO provided emergency distance learning support coupled with mental health assistance, benefiting thousands of displaced learners.
In Palestine, particularly in Gaza, UNESCO combined tertiary education support with psychosocial services to address trauma-related learning barriers. In South Sudan, UNESCO strengthened the Educational Management Information System to collect crisis-responsive sex-disaggregated data, essential for addressing conflict-driven educational disruptions.

Box 1 Afghanistan's Education Crisis: Making A Stand

The *de facto* government in Afghanistan is systematically denying girls and women access to education. This crisis is unprecedented. After the enrolment of women and girls in primary education reached 80 per cent by 2021, the Taliban's return has dismantled girls' education entirely. Girls above 6th grade have been banned from schools, women excluded from universities, and as of December 2024, barred from medical training – including midwifery and gynecology.

The human toll extends beyond classrooms. Confined to homes, Afghan women face rising domestic violence, depression, and high suicide rates. Early forced marriages increase as families see few alternatives. By sidelining half its population, Afghanistan cripples its own recovery potential.

UNESCO dedicated International Women's Day 2025 to Afghan women, hosting a high-level conference in Paris. The event brought together Afghan activists, artists, and international experts, spotlighting the millions of girls and women barred from education and amplifying voices silenced at home.

Beyond advocacy, UNESCO supports alternative learning pathways: community literacy classes in safe spaces, online university partnerships, and radio-television programmes beaming lessons into homes. The organization conducted extensive consultations with women's rights groups and published *Banned from Education: A review of the right to education in Afghanistan*, guiding pilot initiatives led by Afghan women's organizations.

As the UN's lead education agency, UNESCO maintains an uncompromising stance: nothing replaces classroom education. The Organization continues advocating internationally for the immediate, unconditional return of all Afghan women and girls to school.

High-Level International Conference on Afghan Women and Girls organised by UNESCO for the International Women's Day, 7 March 2025.

© UNESCO/Christelle Alix

In Burundi, 4,280 children in vulnerable situations, including 2,410 girls, have been enrolled in school and have received psychosocial support.

A core component of UNESCO's work involved supporting displaced persons, drawing on extensive experience from supporting girls and women in Afghanistan, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Ecuador, and Ukrainian learners in European host countries.

> ***In the past, I was always worried if we would have enough to feed the children. I never expected a remote Migrant Learning Centre like mine would receive this kind of assistance. Now I no longer have to worry, and I am thankful for the support. I will keep taking care of the children until my very last breath.***
>
> ***Principal of a Migrant Learning Centre**, supported by the UNESCO Care and Recovery for Migrant Children project*

Box 2

Resilience through STEM Education in Palestine

UNESCO is harnessing STEM education as a critical driver of learning continuity and resilience for women and girls, even amid challenging circumstances. The innovative *Girls in Tech, Transforming Futures with STEM and Digitalization* project brings together education and new technologies, reaching 120 adolescents – 80 per cent of whom are girls – in the West Bank.

Through this intervention, adolescent students, are empowered to leverage digital technologies for community resilience and development. The project not only supports their personal and professional growth but also equips them with tools to create digital solutions that advance the rights and empowerment of women and girls.

Using project-based learning and STEM methodologies, participants engage in coding, robotics, and artificial intelligence. By focusing on practical challenges faced by their communities, *Girls in Tech* strengthens students' ability to drive positive change, ensuring that the next generation of Palestinian women is prepared to lead, innovate, and build resilient communities.

© UNESCO

Participants of UNESCO Girls in Tech Palestine project.

In many of these contexts, UNESCO enabled learners to continue their schooling, offered catch-up, accelerated and alternative learning programmes, and provided psychosocial support services paying special attention to the needs of women and girls.

For instance, in partnership with the Thai Ministry of Education and with support from the Government of Japan, UNESCO, launched the *Care and Recovery for Migrant Children* project to address the educational and psychosocial needs of over 7,000 migrant learners along the Thai-Myanmar border. The initiative focused on restoring learning continuity through digital tools, emergency distance education, and alternative learning pathways. It also integrated mental health and psychosocial support into educational programming, trained teachers in crisis-sensitive instruction, and promoted safe, inclusive learning environments within Migrant Learning Centres (MLCs). The project operates under a humanitarian-development-peace nexus, prioritizing the well-being of children affected by displacement and trauma, while also strengthening local capacities to deliver inclusive education and support services. This approach ensures that migrant girls and boys not only recover academically but also receive the emotional and social care essential for long-term resilience and integration.

Beyond supporting learners directly, UNESCO **trained teachers to deliver crisis-sensitive instruction**, for instance providing support to Afghan refugees in Iran, training of over 1,300 teachers in Iraq and reinforcing the capacities of teachers in Myanmar and Sudan.

UNESCO also developed specific resources for educators, such as the guidance for teachers and educators: *Education for Children and Young People Formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups*. This self-learning tool is tailored for both formal and non-formal education settings and aims to equip educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to support children, with a special focus on girls. It also serves as a valuable resource for policymakers involved in programming and training in conflict-affected and post-conflict settings.

Lastly, UNESCO brings distinctive added value in **advancing gender equality through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in crisis settings**, with a particular focus on developing the skills necessary for building inclusive and peaceful societies. The project *Revive the Spirit of Mosul* in Iraq, demonstrated tangible impact: 1,315 trainees (18 per cent women) acquired construction skills, with graduates securing employment and establishing businesses. Notably, women's participation in such traditionally male-dominated fields challenged gender stereotypes while contributing to post-conflict reconstruction.

Protecting and amplifying the voices and rights of women journalists, artists and scientists

In conflict and crisis contexts worldwide, women journalists, artists, and scientists face unprecedented challenges that threaten not only their personal safety but also their vital contributions to peace, recovery, and resilience.

The escalating threats to women journalists, particularly through technology-facilitated gender-based violence, is a critical concern. New data produced by UNESCO in 2025 further details such threats to women journalists in Ukraine. *Her Voice, Their Target: Gendered online violence against Ukrainian women journalists*, revealed alarming findings: 81 per cent of surveyed women journalists faced online violence, including gender-based trolling (32 per cent), disinformation campaigns (27 per cent), and threats of sexual violence (16 per cent). This systematic targeting aims to silence voices that provide balanced narratives and counter extremist messaging – precisely when such perspectives are most needed.

UNESCO further scaled up its **targeted assistance to women journalists operating in countries in crisis** in 2024-2025. This included safety training, psychosocial support, and financial grants. In Afghanistan, its efforts created jobs for 136 women, revived seven women-led radio stations, supported the production and broadcast of more than 1200 programmes on topics such as financial literacy, culture or mental health for women and girls and 1,850 episodes of informal education classes. 883 media workers were trained (including 367 women) in safety and conflict-sensitive reporting with European Union funding under the project, *Support to Afghan Media Resilience to Foster Peace and Security (2021-2024)*. Additionally, over 90 women journalists received financial support in dedicated women-led advocacy groups. These networks are designed to enhance women's participation in the media, improve working conditions and advocate for improved access to information for women and girls. In Sudan and Haiti, UNESCO responded to the ongoing crises with financial aid, safety training, and psychosocial support. In Palestine, capacity building on legal rights and improved access to legal aid addressed online abuse faced by women journalists and promoted the integration of gender perspectives within newsrooms. In Gaza, journalists continue to face daily threats to their lives, with women being exposed to gendered risks.

Through local partners, UNESCO has provided emergency humanitarian supplies to over 200 women journalists and psychosocial assistance to over 300 media workers, particularly women. The Organization has also assisted 170 journalists, mainly women, so that they can continue reporting – despite the incredible risks – and provide lifesaving information. In Ukraine, around 2,500 journalists received training, 560 – of which over 65 per cent women – were granted emergency financial support, and nearly 100 newsrooms benefited from material or editorial aid, alongside the creation of six journalists' hubs. In Lebanon, UNESCO provided psychological support and replaced damaged equipment for women journalists, ensuring they could continue reporting and delivering vital information to affected communities.

© UNESCO/GOGO Play

25 young women filmmakers in Juba gain skills and storytelling tools through a UNESCO–GOGO Play training programme.

UNESCO's *Global Media Defense Fund* supported over 8,000 journalists (40 per cent women) worldwide, facilitating nearly 1,200 instances of legal assistance and 178 strategic litigation actions. Comprehensive safety protocols and digital security training programmes prepared women media professionals across 61 countries to navigate increasingly hostile information environments.

Artistic creation in crisis environments is not just an act of creative expression but an act of resilience and resistance. However, **women cultural professionals and artists face unique vulnerabilities and challenges** in these contexts and require protection from persecution, emergency relocation, resources and assistance mechanisms at different levels. In response, the *UNESCO-Aschberg Programme and the Heritage Emergency Fund* intensified efforts to protect artistic freedom in crisis contexts. In Ukraine, UNESCO supported 57 internally displaced artists, including 25 women, by facilitating artistic residencies in 13 host cultural institutions across safer areas of the country.

> ***Amid war, amid conflict, amid violence, women are creating art.***
> ***It is a cure. It is healing.***
> ***And it is a way to document history.***
>
> ***Mursal Sayas***
> *Afghan Writer/Journalist*

This followed the successful relocation of 38 Ukrainian women artists to temporary residencies in 13 European countries during the previous biennium.

Leading advocacy at the global level, UNESCO held a global thematic consultation on International Women's Day, 2025, *Art for All: Gender Equality at the Heart of Tomorrow's Cultural Policies*. The result was a **Call to Action for the protection and promotion of women artists and cultural professionals at risk in emergency situations** by supporting their safety, livelihoods, psycho-social well-being, and opportunities to create. This includes providing support for the continuation of their creative work and establishing safe corridors for their work to be exhibited and distributed. It also calls on donors to provide grants to support their creative endeavours in exile. Along with the Call to Action, key findings from the *Global Survey on Women, Culture, and Emergencies* conducted by UNESCO were presented to Ministers of Culture from around the world at MONDIACULT 2025. These findings help to better understand the challenges faced by women artists, cultural heritage professionals, and practitioners in the contexts of emergency preparedness, response, and early recovery and better orient effective policy responses.

Researcher Kseniia Minakova's laboratory in Ukraine, featured in UNESCO's publication Resilient Minds: The Unseen Struggles of Scientists in Wartime Ukraine.

© Kseniia Minakova and Mykhailo Kirichenko/scienceatrisk.org

During the biennium, UNESCO also made significant progress in its work to **defend women scientists in crisis and emergency settings**. Its 2024 *Call to Action to Close the Gender Gap in Science* led to the establishment of a roadmap to address the barriers exacerbated by the crises faced by women scientists, such as limited access to resources, leadership roles, and safe working environments. On the ground, 24 refugee and displaced women scientists were awarded Master's scholarships under the pilot *Women in Science Displacement Outreach Master's Programme* (OWSD WISDOM), which aims to support women in STEM fields affected by displacement. UNESCO also supported 217 displaced women scientists in Sudan and 46 in Egypt by facilitating their networking and inclusion in platforms such as *UNESCO's Arab Women in Science Platform*.

Box 3

UNESCO's Global Survey on Women, Culture and Emergencies

In 2025, UNESCO launched its first ever global survey on the impact of emergencies on women working in the cultural sector including armed conflicts, natural and human-induced hazards, and other crises. The survey targeted both individuals (artists, cultural and heritage professionals) and organizations (public institutions, professional organizations, networks). Its objective was to amplify the voices of women artists, heritage professionals, and cultural workers who often face heightened vulnerabilities during emergencies, including displacement, income loss, and exclusion from decision-making roles and loss of opportunities to create and/or exhibit their work.

The survey results contributed to shaping discussions among Ministers of Culture from around the world at MONDIACULT 2025. They will also contribute to UNESCO's forthcoming publication, offering evidence-based recommendations to protect women cultural professionals and ensure their leadership during crises and post-conflict reconstruction periods.

Supporting the participation of women in recovery actions for the reconstruction of cultural infrastructures and heritage

During 2024-2025, UNESCO significantly advanced women's participation in recovery and reconstruction actions across conflict-affected regions, demonstrating how women's involvement transforms post-conflict recovery from reconstruction into sustainable community resilience.

UNESCO's commitment to gender parity achieved remarkable results through the *Heritage Emergency Fund*, with women comprising almost 57 per cent of the 2024 training beneficiaries in **emergency preparedness and cultural response** across 20 countries. This brings the total to over 1,500 women trained since 2015, representing 44 per cent of all beneficiaries, thus positioning UNESCO as a global catalyst for transformation and inclusive heritage protection in times of crisis.

In Central Afghanistan, recognizing that cultural expression is key to fostering identity and resilience especially in the most challenging times, the UNESCO's *Heritage Emergency Fund* and the *UNESCO-Aschberg Programme* supported **educational continuity and income generation** for 50 women weavers and their families. In partnership with the Turquoise Mountain Foundation, UNESCO provided capacity building on carpet weaving techniques, design and marketing as well as income-generating opportunities for 50 women weavers from 10 households in Bamiyan. This initiative addressed both immediate livelihood needs and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, demonstrating how supporting women's cultural work can provide vital income generation for entire communities.

In Yemen, the *Youth Employment through Heritage and Culture* project includes significant gender-responsive components. Almost 800 women are actively involved in the rehabilitation of historic buildings and cultural management roles. This comprehensive focus on preserving cultural identity, promoting gender equality and creating livelihood opportunities demonstrates how **women's participation in heritage protection also contributes to promote inclusive cultural recovery and strengthen social cohesion**.

In Ukraine, UNESCO worked with the Museum of Contemporary Art of Ukraine (MOCA) to provide funding to support 14 new creative projects to keep cultural life alive amidst war. Building on the success of the 7 projects supported in the previous biennium, the new projects were led by Ukrainian cultural institutions and covered a range of fields from opera to films, exhibitions and performances, in the regions of Kherson, Kharkiv and Kyiv. In addition, nine women-led creative projects received targeted support, with four initiatives specifically documenting the impact of the war on women.

Under the three-year EU Horizon Europe programme *RESILIAGE*, UNESCO advanced a holistic understanding of resilience and heritage drivers through community-based methodologies, integrating a gender perspective into all disaster management practices. These methodologies were notably used in the curricula of the *SHEroes Resilience Summer School* aimed at empowering women in disaster risk reduction through heritage.

> ***I faced a lot of criticism, with people suggesting I should stay in an office instead of being out in the field with male workers. I had to prove myself every day, but my hard work and commitment helped me gain their trust.***
>
> ***Hanan**, architect, trainee and resident engineer involved in UNESCO's Youth Employment through Heritage and Culture project in Yemen*

© UNESCO

Hanan working in the field as part of UNESCO's Youth Employment through Heritage and Culture project in the Historic City of Aden (Yemen).

Box 4

The Baalbeck Festival is Transforming Women's Roles in Lebanon's Cultural Scene

With UNESCO's support, Lebanon's prestigious Baalbeck International Festival is reshaping how women participate in the region's cultural events.

The project's impact has been immediate and tangible. Through four intensive workshops held between May and July 2025, seven young women received specialized training in festival management, while five others contributed directly to the production of the Opera Carmen through costume design and creation, thus gaining hands-on experience in festival production.

But the transformation goes beyond the festival. "This project is changing how people see women in culture" explains one participant. Previously relegated to the sidelines, women are now taking on leadership roles that showcase their creative talents and organizational skills. The initiative has created a ripple effect, inspiring other cultural institutions across the region to examine their own practices.

The development of a comprehensive gender-responsive strategy for festival management ensures these changes will be sustainable. By demonstrating that cultural events can be powerful vehicles for gender equality, the *Baalbeck* project has the potential to establish a new standard for inclusive festival management throughout the Middle East and beyond.

© UNESCO

With UNESCO's support, Ten young women design the visual identity for the Opera Carmen at the Baalbeck International Festival.

Facilitating women's participation in preventing violent extremism (PVE) and disaster risk reduction (DRR)

UNESCO's actions have played a crucial role in implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the Sendai Gender Action Plan, particularly in facilitating women's participation in preventing violent extremism (PVE) and disaster risk reduction (DRR).

The evidence from 2024 and 2025 confirms that UNESCO's integrated approach provides essential foundations for sustainable peace and resilience by addressing the interconnected nature of contemporary threats, where violent extremism and disaster vulnerabilities often reinforce each other, especially in fragile contexts.

Education is a cornerstone of UNESCO's prevention efforts. In this area, the *Education for Peace Flagship Programme* addresses the root causes of conflict and violence through gender-responsive approaches by specifically integrating women's leadership in peacebuilding through curriculum reform and teacher training and challenging existing gender stereotypes that contribute to extremist narratives. By strengthening education systems' capacity to foster resilience and social cohesion, with an explicit focus on empowering women as agents of change in preventing radicalization, this approach recognised education's critical role in addressing systemic factors that make communities vulnerable to violent extremism.

Infrastructure protection and community resilience building formed another critical dimension of UNESCO's action. Through the *Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector* (GADRRRES), 6,000 school buildings were assessed and safety upgrades provided in 900 schools. The work of this alliance protected 400,000 students and teachers while ensuring women's voices informed vulnerability assessments and safety protocols, demonstrating the meaningful impact of women in DRR planning. For example, in the Dominican Republic, women participated in community consultation processes that informed protection strategies for 80,000 students during natural hazards.

© ACORAB Nepal

Radio journalist Sharda Pun highlights the vital role of community radios in disaster response, as part of UNESCO's programme. Right after the earthquakein Nepal, UNESCO provided radio equipment to support recovery efforts.

> ***To every woman thinking about a future in tsunami science or disaster risk reduction: Never let anyone make you doubt your value. Your ideas, your energy, your insight are needed more than ever.***
>
> ***Dr. Mahyat Shafapour Tehrany***
>
> *Scientist and key contributor to the implementation of the Tsunami Ready Recognition Programme of UNESCO-IOC*

In Haiti, post-earthquake reconstruction efforts included training 80 women in earthquake-resistant construction techniques enabling women to lead community resilience initiatives and retrofit vulnerable buildings.

To further systematize and enhance the effectiveness of its interventions across its mandate, UNESCO developed a **practical guide for incorporating gender equality into its work on disaster risk management** (DRR). This tool has been instrumental in informing the deployment of early warning systems, prioritizing women in community-driven engagement strategies and recognising women's crucial role as first responders in disaster contexts. In East Africa, for example, the implementation of a dedicated AI chatbot reached approximately 5 million smartphone users with real-time alerts and emergency information. The chatbot enabled the collection of sex-disaggregated data to ensure disaster preparedness protocols addressed women's specific vulnerabilities and capacities.

Media, communication and information played a vital role in UNESCO's strategy on Small Island Developing States where 12 countries received targeted support prioritizing women journalists and media professionals. Training focused on disaster communication, early warning information dissemination, and climate reporting with mobile broadcasting equipment and digital skills development ensuring women could effectively communicate disaster risks to vulnerable communities. In parallel, the *Massive Open Online Course* (MOOC) on DRR expanded women's access to technical knowledge across SIDS, while the *Ocean Decade Tsunami Programme* aimed to protect all at-risk coastal communities by 2030 through gender-inclusive approaches.

While these achievements demonstrate significant progress, realizing the full potential of women's participation in preventing violent extremism and disaster risk reduction requires further sustained investment, enhanced data collection, and continued commitment to gender-responsive programming across all crisis contexts.

Box 6

UNESCO's Contributions to Implementing the Sendai Gender Action Plan

The *Gender Action Plan for the Sendai Framework (Sendai GAP)* was launched in March 2024, as the first dedicated tool outlining key actions for gender-responsive disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation.

Through knowledge sharing, advocacy and capacity building, UNESCO supported the implementation of the *Sendai GAP* in Brazil, Ukraine, Vietnam and Zimbabwe, analysing the impact of water-related disasters on women and girls, incorporating a gendered focused assessment in early flood warning systems and including gendered approaches to groundwater management and adaptive planning.

Box 5

UNESCO's Gender Equality Initiatives Supported by the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund

The UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) is the UN's primary financial tool to sustain peace in countries or situations at risk or affected by violent conflict. With the promotion of inclusion through women's empowerment as one of its priority windows, it supports UN entities, governments, regional organizations, multilateral banks, national multi-donor trust funds and civil society organizations.

In 2024, the PBF approved funding for seven projects involving UNESCO, five of which had a strong focus on promoting gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, Haiti, Madagascar and South Sudan on issues ranging from gender-based violence to the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls. In South Sudan, for example, UNESCO, UN Women and UNDP cooperate to support the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) on Gender and Security Sector Reform (SSR) for the period 2023-2027 through the project *Women in South Sudan's Security Sector: A Path to Inclusive and Transformative Leadership*.

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Women in uniform from South Sudan's security sector attend UNESCO literacy and numeracy classes in Juba, part of a joint project with UNDP and UN Women funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

2024-2025 IN REVIEW – FROM COMMITMENT TO IMPACT

As conflicts multiply and climate-related disasters intensify, the 25th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2025 offers a pivotal moment to both reflect and renew commitments. During the 2024–2025 biennium, UNESCO's comprehensive response reaffirmed the relevance of its mandate as a cornerstone for peace and security, establishing the Organization as a key actor within the UN system. UNESCO's presence across diverse crisis contexts has proven its ability to deliver tangible results in uncertain environments. It is drawing lessons from this biennium to develop a comprehensive crisis and emergency strategy with gender equality at its core.

UNESCO'S 2024-2025 MONITORING DATA

- **22 countries** (6 in Africa, 4 SIDS) advanced **gender-transformative socioeconomic policies** and **gender-based resilience** to better face the gendered impacts of current crisis
- **20 countries** (7 in Africa, 3 SIDS) strengthened their resilience and response capacity to **challenges faced by women and girls with regard to natural hazards and climate change**
- **57 countries** (19 in Africa, 2 SIDS) implemented **gender-responsive educational and training activities in the culture field**, in times of peace and emergency
- **In Afghanistan**, over **37,000 women and girls** benefited from community-based literacy programmes
- **In Ukraine**, **407 women journalists** received emergency grants since the war began
- **In South Sudan**, gender-based violence tackled through media outreach and training – reaching **8,000 people** and over **50 key stakeholders**

Results extracted from selected gender-related indicators of UNESCO Programme and Budget 2024-2025 and project data.

GENDER EQUALITY AT UNESCO

Gender equality as a global priority not only applies to UNESCO's programmes, but also to its internal functioning and institutional culture. The 2024-2025 biennium marked many achievements and reflects UNESCO's unwavering dedication to promote gender equality as part of its day-to-day operations whether it be strategic planning, financial management, oversight functions, staffing standards or partnership development and resource mobilisation.

Transversal Strategy: Gender Equality is Everyone's Business

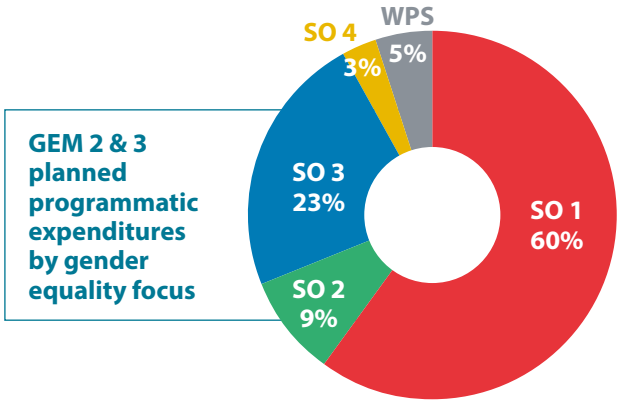
UNESCO's comparative advantage in advancing gender equality lies in its cross-cutting mandate covering education, sciences, culture, communication and information which are all crucial to address the root causes of gender inequalities, such as violence against women and girls and providing opportunities in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence or neurotechnology.

Accordingly, through the adoption of its Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and its Programme and Budget 2022-2025 (41 C/5 and 42/C5), UNESCO made gender equality 'everyone's business' and **fully mainstreamed gender equality in its core strategic planning and programming documents**. This set an ambitious agenda for the implementation of gender related results, in line with SDG 5.

The **Global Priority Gender Equality Framework**, designed in 2022, has contributed to improve the implementation of this global priority across UNESCO's mandate, in line with its four strategic objectives and its cross-cutting theme on crisis preparedness and emergency response. The framework applies measurable gender related outcomes, outputs, and performance indicators to ensure its comprehensive and transversal implementation and monitoring.

50%
of planned gender programmatic expenditures were allocated to GEM 2 and 22% to GEM 3 workplans in 2024-2025

Building on this wide-ranging institutional framework, sustained efforts to specifically address the promotion of gender equality during 2024-2025 resulted in GEM 2 (gender equality as a significant objective) and GEM 3 (gender equality as principal objective) workplans accounting for 72 per cent of UNESCO's planned programmatic expenditures for gender equality, with 83 per cent of these investments targeting SO1 (to achieve gender equality in and through education) and SO3 (to promote inclusion and combat gender-based violence), and 5 per cent on the emerging cross-cutting theme of crisis preparedness and emergency response.



SO 1 Achieve gender equality in and through education
SO 2 Empower women in science and technology for environmental action
SO 3 Promote inclusion and combat gender-based violence
SO 4 Bridge the digital gender divide
WPS Women, Peace and Security

Funding Gender Equality Action

The 42 C/5 Programme and Budget for 2024-2025 (42 C/5) substantially **increased the allocation for gender equality work** from 16 per cent in 2022-2023 to 19 per cent of the Integrated Budget Framework (IBF) of the Programme Sectors and the Division for Gender Equality in 2024-2025. In real terms, this implied USD 106.4 million more funding for gender equality programming, that ranks among the highest in the UN System.

Furthermore, the mainstreaming of gender equality as a global priority is also visible through UNESCO's **Participation Programme**, which supports the implementation of national, sub-regional, inter-regional and regional projects submitted by Member States and NGOs directly related to the mandate of the Organisation. As of June 2025, 77 gender equality related projects were approved by the Director-General of UNESCO for a total of approximately USD 1.5 million.

Resolute Support from Member States, Multilateral Organizations and Private Donors

The sustained financial commitment of Member States and strong multilateral cooperation are essential for advancing gender equality objectives across the organization's programmes and initiatives. **From 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2025, 288 donors signed agreements with UNESCO for programmes and projects including a gender equality dimension.**

25.2 per cent of total funding mobilized during this period is dedicated to support UNESCO's gender equality work (USD 149.7 million). Voluntary contributions allocated to gender equality have thus increased by 16.3 per cent compared to the 2022-2023 period (USD 128.7 millions). Contributions supporting programmes and projects with a significant contribution to gender equality (GEM 2) or with gender equality as a principal objective (GEM 3) totaled USD 121.2 millions, representing 81 per cent of the total funding mobilized for gender equality.

Voluntary contributions for gender equality increased by **16.3%** compared to last biennium

UNESCO's top 20 donors collectively represented 87.1 per cent of the total funds mobilized to operationalize Global Priority Gender Equality. The funding for gender equality predominantly came from UN agencies and multilateral sources, which represented 63.9 per cent of the voluntary contributions of the top 20 donors. This is a remarkable change from the previous biennium, when they accounted for 20.5 per cent of the funds provided by the 20 top donors and demonstrates the **significant progress made in UNESCO's cooperation and alignment with multilateral action for gender equality**. Among these top contributors are the World Bank, UNDP, the European Union, UNICEF, UNAIDS, the African Development Bank, and FAO.

Governments also continued to play a central role, representing 33.3 per cent of the voluntary contributions for gender equality among the top 20 donors. They include Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden, and the Republic of Korea.

Among the private donors that contributed to the UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality are foundations and civil society organizations such as: Asociacion Quellaveco, Fundacion Banorte, the Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Foundation, Save the Children, or the Patrick J. McGovern Foundation. Private companies supporting UNESCO's work on gender equality in 2024-2025 include Kingold Group, Eni, Gi-Kace Consult, Nestlé, Huawei and Nike, among others.

Highlights from the Division for Gender Equality in 2024-2025

The Division for Gender Equality, located in the Cabinet of the Director-General, provides strategic policy advice and works with the Programme Sectors and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) to implement UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality. It actively supports them in all stages of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality actions to respond to new challenges. The Division also supports the production of new knowledge through research on emerging areas of work, provides capacity development for UNESCO staff at HQs and in Field Offices, and undertakes communication and advocacy actions to promote UNESCO's work on gender equality.

Strategic leadership

The Director of the Division is a member of the Director-General's Strategic Advisory Council, the Programme Coordination Group (PCG), the Digital Transformation Working Group and the Communications Advisory Board. A new feature of the biennium was the strategic leadership of the Division to integrate gender equality perspectives in the work of UNESCO in crisis and emergency contexts. To this end, the Division is developing strategic guidelines for the Organisation to ensure the specific needs of women and girls are addressed in all emergency and crisis actions, that they are protected and fully engaged in leadership or decision-making roles. In addition, the Division contributed to 6 UNSG global reports showcasing UNESCO's contributions and advancements on gender equality in areas such as peace and security, digital technologies and gender-based violence.

Programme support, monitoring and evaluation

The Division supports the development of new programmes to implement Global Priority Gender Equality across UNESCO's mandate. It produced new knowledge on the Ocean and gender equality to open up new programmatic work by the IOC. It also produced practical guides to support the mainstreaming of gender in cultural policy making as well as on how to uncover gender bias in generative AI models to support the implementation of the 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. The Division was a member of several IOS evaluations to ensure the gender perspective in their programmatic audits and assessments and monitored 169 GEM2 and GEM3 Sector workplans. Revised UN Gender Markers were integrated into UNESCORE, improving monitoring and budget tracking capabilities and providing a more in-depth analysis of financial investments on gender equality. To support their implementation, targeted tools and training modules were developed and largely deployed in the field and at Headquarters. As a result, UNESCO was able to provide financial data on its expenditures by GEM for the year 2024 to the finance and budget network of the Board of UN Chief Executives (CEB) for the first time.

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Kingston

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Dakar

Capacity development

The IOS evaluation of Global priority Gender Equality concluded that when the field offices receive dedicated institutional support and capacity development on gender equality, important results are achieved. In response, an extensive capacity needs assessment was carried out with the Field Offices and a long term programme was launched in 2024 to cover all UNESCO's field network. Over the biennium, the Division delivered capacity development trainings on gender equality to 14 regional and national Field Offices and Antennas in Buenos Aires and Sarajevo (429 staff members of which 272 women). During these missions, it held high level meetings with UN representatives in countries, beneficiaries of UNESCO's support as well as UNESCO Chairs to raise awareness of UNESCO's gender equality priorities and facilitate new partnerships at the country level. The result was the design, funding and implementation of new actions at the country level on empowering women and girls in the cultural and creative industries (Beirut, Dakar), in sports (Lima), in climate action (Almaty, Quito) as well as to address the impact of technology-facilitate gender based violence (Kingston, Kathmandu), to provide girls with digital skills (Ramallah) or engage men and boys as allies for gender equality (Nairobi).

88.6%

of the participants to the gender equality trainings for Field Offices recognised the usefulness of the knowledge provided as very or quite helpful for their daily work

> ***I was expecting to gain a basic understanding of gender equality, but the experience went beyond that, I gained in-depth knowledge and insights for the design and implementation of projects.***
>
> *Participant of the capacity-building from UNESCO Field Office in Dhaka*

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Knowledge production

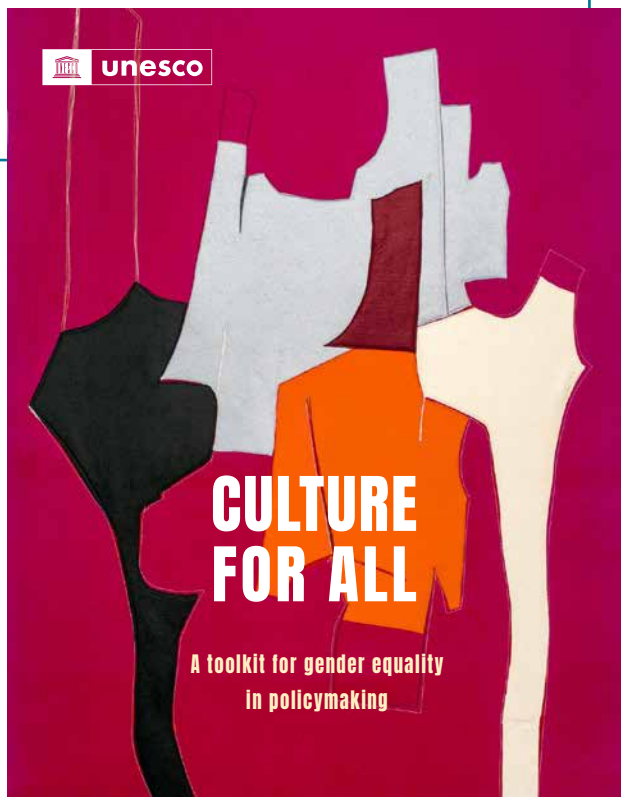
The Division published pioneering policy briefs for the G20, namely, *Changing the Equation: Securing STEM Futures for Women* (2024) and *Unchartered Waters: An Exploration for Gender Equality and the Ocean* (2024). In addition, the Division led several other research on emerging issues, in particular, *Your Opinion Doesn't Matter: Exposing Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in an Era of Generative AI* (2024) and *Red Teaming AI for Social Good: The Playbook* (2025). It also supported a global survey on women, culture and emergencies and the production of *Culture for All: A toolkit for gender equality in policymaking* (2025). The Division is a member of the editorial board of several global flagship publications, among them the *Global Report on Cultural Policies* presented to the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2025. It has peer reviewed 16 major reports, including the *World Water Report* and *AI and the Future of Learning*.

Global advocacy

The Division worked with UNESCO's Member States organised in the Group of Friends for Gender Equality that advocates for the empowerment of women and girls, particularly in multilateralism. It coordinated UNESCO's strong presence at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2024 and 2025, showcasing achievements across all Sectors. It led high-impact events including *Gender Equality to Solve the Climate Emergency* (January 2024), *Score a Goal for Women* (March 2024), and *Art for All: Gender Equality at the Heart of Cultural Policy Making* (March 2025), each resulting in Call to Actions with key recommendations feeding flagship initiatives led by Programme Sectors. The Division also designed and implemented a *Red Teaming Event* with Humane Intelligence for UNESCO Ambassadors and staff to test generative artificial intelligence models for gender bias.

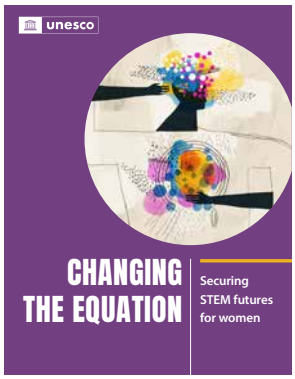
CULTURE FOR ALL: A Toolkit for Gender Equality in Policymaking

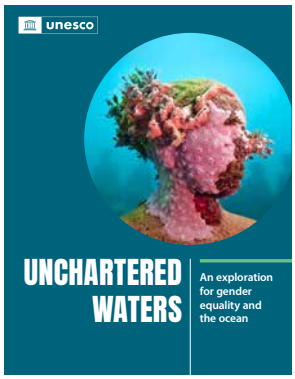
This new toolkit was launched at MONDIACULT 2025 and makes the case for the integration of gender equality as a core component of cultural policy. It underscores that mainstreaming and targeting gender equality in cultural policies and measures not only aligns with international commitments towards upholding fundamental human rights but also enhances the transformative role of culture – across all its dimensions– to achieve sustainable development. It also serves as an advocacy and capacity-building resource for cultural institutions, professional organizations of the cultural and creative sectors, and private sector funders who are all called upon to play a crucial role in the design and implementation of programmes to empower women and girls to create and fully participate in cultural life.

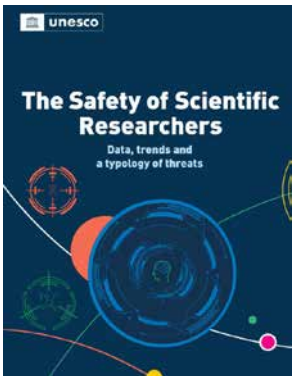


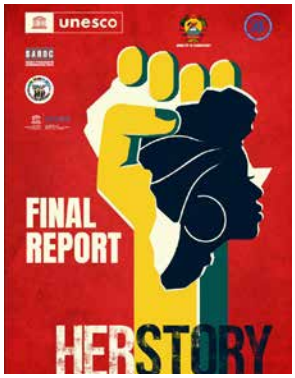
UNESCO Publications on Gender Equality

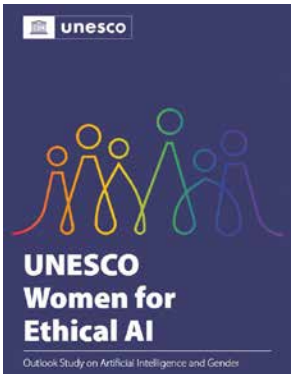
From January 2024 to August 2025, UNESCO released 48 publications with gender equality as their principal objective (GEM 3).

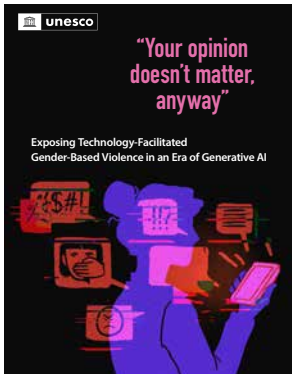


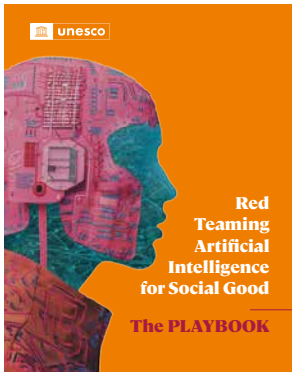


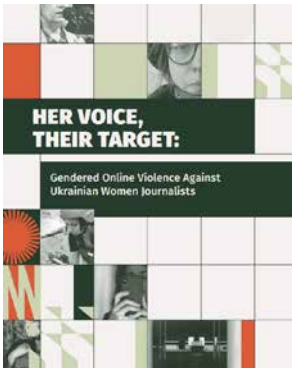












Institutional Culture to Achieve Gender Equality

UNESCO's Human Resources Strategy (2023-2027) prioritizes gender equality through a Gender Parity Action Plan, targeting 50 per cent women in senior management by 2027. The strategy includes learning, mentoring, career support, and well-being initiatives.

At end of June 2025, women comprised 58 per cent of UNESCO's total staff, with the following breakdown:

- 41 per cent of Directors and Assistant Directors-General are women. This figure has not changed since June 2023.
- 58 per cent of professional category staff are women, which represents an increase from 55 per cent in June 2023 with the following breakdown, women represent:
  - 43 per cent of P-5 positions (slight increase of 3 per centage points from 2023);
  - 50 per cent of P-4 positions (slight decrease of 2 per centage points from 2023);
  - 56 per cent of P-3 positions (no change);
  - 71 per cent of P-1/P-2 positions (increase of 3 per centage points from 2023).
- An overwhelming 60 per cent of General Services staff.

UNESCO continues to adopt measures that support a gender equality culture. It finalized a unified and inclusive parental leave framework with enhanced entitlements, including daily nursing time, travel provisions for nursing/single parents, foetal death leave, and flexible work arrangements. Work-life balance policies were introduced including staggered hours, part-time work, telecommuting, and extended learning breaks.

UNESCO maintains specific **policies to prevent and respond to Sexual Harassment and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**, including an Anti-harassment Policy (updated in June 2019) and a Policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (November 2020). These zero-tolerance policies align with UN best practices and allocate clear roles and responsibilities. UNESCO reports annually to the Executive Board on both policies.

Gender Equality is central to UNESCO's Internal Oversight functions. In 2024, five corporate evaluations were assessed against UN-SWAP criteria following UNEG Guidance to ensure that Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is integrated in the evaluation scope of analysis and criteria and that the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations reflect a gender analysis.

The 2025 *Synthesis of UNESCO Evaluations* noted remarkable progress toward Global Priority Gender Equality across UNESCO's regions and Sectors. While previous synthesis showed gender equality implementation primarily in education programmes, the 2025 synthesis reported robust gender considerations across all UNESCO's Sectors. The evaluations identified several areas for improvement including access to training and expertise, increasing the visibility of gender equality actions at the country level, ensuring adequate resources, and providing practical examples for implementing and monitoring gender equality projects.

In 2025, **the donor-driven Multilateral Organisation for Performance Appraisal Network (MOPAN) recognised UNESCO's substantial progress in mainstreaming gender equality**, noting that it has successfully integrated gender requirements in its programming tools and budget tracking mechanisms, and that corporate evaluations showed effective application of gender across Sectors. The assessment highlighted concrete achievements including interventions that improved gender equality across all five UNESCO Sectors, such as the *Keeping Girls in the Picture campaign* reaching 400 million people and training programmes for journalists on women's safety.

Women represent 58% of UNESCO's staff in June 2025

Compliance with the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality

UNESCO aligns with international gender equality instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, monitoring its work through the UN System-wide Action Plan (UNSWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

The UN-SWAP is a UN system-wide accountability framework designed to capture, monitor and measure performance on mainstreaming gender perspectives into the work of the UN system and drive progress towards gender-related SDG results. It sets out seventeen performance indicators clustered around six broad areas including results-based management, oversight, accountability, human and financial resources, capacity and knowledge, and communication and coherence. At the end of 2024, this accountability framework was revised to UNSWAP 3.0 with new indicators that integrate the Secretary-General's Gender Equality Acceleration Plan (GEAP) and ultimately raise the bar for gender mainstreaming by all UN entities.

UNESCO's UN-SWAP Report Results as assessed by UN Women for 2024 demonstrate its **best performance to date with an 88 per cent compliance rate**, outperforming both Specialized entities (85 per cent) and the overall UN System (80 per cent). UNESCO's key achievements included: the introduction of a robust capacity development programme aimed particularly at UNESCO's Field Offices, progress in implementing the revised Gender Equality Markers, enhanced evaluation and strategic planning and reporting on gender related SDG's, leadership and knowledge production and communication, and increased budget allocations for gender equality coordination.

UN Women commended UNESCO for its significant progress to advance gender-transformative outcomes across UNESCO's mandate and called for the Organisation to continue its efforts to achieve gender parity at all staff levels and to set benchmarks for the allocation of financial resources for gender equality that can strengthen accountability and transparency and align with the new requirements under UN SWAP 3.0.

© UNESCO/Christelle Alix

'Beyond Birth' by Kenyan artist Thandiwe Muriu joined the UNESCO Art Collection in 2025.

UNESCO GLOBAL COMMUNITY

UNESCO Centres

UNESCO Chairs

UNITWIN Networks

UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality is put into action from the global to the local levels through programmes and projects, advocacy actions, and the production of new data and knowledge products. This work is possible only through the commitment and joint action of the entire UNESCO network of Field Offices, institutes and partners around the world who collectively bring their unique knowledge, know-how and diverse perspectives to achieve concrete results for gender equality.

UNESCO benefits from the partnership of **52 UNESCO Category II Centres, Chairs and UNITWIN Networks** specialized on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In the 2024-2025 biennium, **3 new gender-related Chairs** joined UNESCO's Community.

UNESCO Centres and Chairs working primarily on STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

1. International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (CIEFFA), Burkina Faso
2. UNESCO Chair on Women, Sciences and Technology in Latin America, Argentina
3. UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development, Early Childhood, Inclusive Education and Gender, United States of America
4. UNESCO Chair for the Promotion of Gender Equality, Universidad del Rosario, Colombia
5. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality in Higher Education Institutions, Peru
6. UNESCO Chair on Youth Leadership in Science, Health, Gender and Education, Kenya
7. UNESCO Chair on Women and Science, France
8. UNESCO Chair in the Culture of Human Rights and Education for Sustainable Development in Pre-school and Primary Education, Romania
9. UNESCO Chair on Gender Studies and Education, Dominican Republic
10. UNESCO Chair in Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Belgium • **NEW**
11. UNESCO Chair on Education, Gender Equity and Wellbeing, United States of America • **NEW**

UNESCO Centres and Chairs working primarily on STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

12. UNESCO Chair in Women, Science and Technology, Sudan
13. UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Development, Brazil
14. UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Decision-making, Côte d'Ivoire
15. UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Decision-making, Morocco
16. Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme, UNESCO Category II Center, Iceland
17. UNESCO Chair in Women, Science and Reasoned Water Management in West Africa, Togo
18. UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Governance, Dominican Republic
19. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality Policies in Science, Technology and Innovation, Spain
20. UNESCO Chair on the Empowerment of Women through Science and Technology, Egypt
21. UNESCO Chair in Women and Science for Development, Haiti
22. UNESCO Chair on Women Participation in Science, Technology and Innovation, Peru

UNESCO Centres and Chairs working primarily on STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

23. UNESCO Chair in Women and Community Health, Kenya
24. UNESCO Chair on Women and their Rights, Morocco
25. UNESCO Chair on Women, Development and Cultures, Spain
26. UNESCO Chair in Media and Gender, China
27. UNESCO Chair in Gender, Leadership and Equity, Mexico
28. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Cyprus
29. UNESCO Chair in Policies on Gender and Equal Rights between Women and Men, Spain
30. UNESCO Chair in Cultural Diversity, Gender and Border Territories, Brazil
31. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, India
32. UNESCO Chair on Improvement in Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Türkiye
33. UNESCO Chair on Gender, Wellbeing and a Culture of Peace, United States of America
34. UNESCO Chair on Gender, Equality and Culture, Türkiye
35. UNESCO Chair on Legal Protection of Women and Education of Woman Entrepreneurs, Türkiye
36. UNESCO Chair for the History of Women in Philosophy, Sciences, and Culture, Brazil
37. UNESCO Chair on Preventing Violence Against Women, Colombia
38. UNESCO Chair on Masculinities and Gender Equality, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
39. Observatory on Women, Sport and Physical Education (GOWSPE), Greece

UNESCO Chairs and Networks working primarily on STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

40. UNESCO Chair in Communication Technology for Women, Republic of Korea
41. International Network on Gender, Media and ICTs, Australia, Italy and Mexico
42. International Network for Women's Empowerment through ICT Skills and Leadership Education, Republic of Korea
43. UNESCO Chair on Gender and Digital Technologies, Namibia
44. Strategic and Institutional Partnership for the Access of Young People and Women to Information and Communication Technologies in Central Africa, Cameroon

UNESCO Chairs working primarily on WOMEN AND CRISIS PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

45. UNESCO Chair on Women, Peace and Security: Building Capacity and Resilience through Education and Research, Greece
46. UNESCO Chair on Gender and Vulnerability in Disaster Risk Reduction Support, Japan
47. UNESCO Chair on Building Peaceful Societies through Research on Gender Equality, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

UNESCO Chairs and Networks working on TRANSVERSAL THEMES

48. UNESCO Chair on Women, Society and Development, Poland
49. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Sustainable Development, Türkiye
50. UNESCO Chair on Gender Equality and Women's Rights, Italy
51. UNITWIN Network on Gender Equality, Argentina
52. UNESCO Chair on Education, Gender Equality and Climate Action, Italy • **NEW**

UNESCO Institutes and Category I Centres contributing to Gender Equality

- UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)
- International Bureau of Education (IBE)
- Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)
- International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)
- UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC)
- International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA)
- UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP)
- Institute of Information Technologies in Education (IITE)
- The Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP)

UNESCO Chairs for Gender Equality

In 2024, a survey was launched to map the work of UNESCO Chairs to determine how their research activities related to the priorities of UNESCO's Global Priority Gender Equality Framework. This survey was initiated by UNESCO's Division for Gender Equality and conducted by Gloria Bonder, Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair on Women, Science and Technology in Latin America (FLACSO, Argentina) and coordinator of the UNITWIN Network on Gender Equality.

The results showed that the majority of Chairs undertook research on the conditions and/or strategies for widening access to equitable and gender-responsive education and learning, including in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Several launched new research on the rise of gender-based violence, discrimination and stereotypes, including in digital environments, and investigations into the resilience and actions of women and girls in promoting sustainable management of natural resources.

Areas of interest for future gender related research were also identified by the participating Chairs. This includes investigations on the digital gender divide, gender bias in AI and technological innovations as well as to collect new data on women digital entrepreneurs. The intersection between gender and environmental action was identified by several Chairs as a future priority to dive further into understanding the gendered impacts of different types of climate crises, especially in the field of water.

UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors, Artists for Peace and Champions

Across the world, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors, Artists for Peace and Champions embody far more than honorary titles – they are committed voices for gender equality. Through their words, creative work and concrete actions, they bring UNESCO's values to life, shed light on persistent inequalities, and open new paths to empowerment for future generations. They speak out, challenge injustice, inspire and take action to ensure that the rights of women and girls are never pushed aside. Their engagement – grounded in experience, visibility and personal commitment – is a powerful force for transformation.

In 2024/2025, these exceptional women took to sports arenas, artistic stages, global forums and cultural dialogue spaces, carrying UNESCO's message with conviction and helping to make gender equality a lived, shared and tangible reality.

PROMOTING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FOR THE PLANET

Gender justice is inseparable from sustainable development. Through her journey as both an athlete and an environmental activist, **Maya Gabeira** embodies women's recognition in sports and leadership in the face of the climate emergency. She advocates for Ocean protection and conservation with the full involvement of women in decision-making. In 2024, on the International Day of Women in Multilateralism, she took part in a global dialogue highlighting gender equality as an essential condition for addressing environmental challenges. In the documentary 'Maya and the Wave' screened at UNESCO Headquarters in 2025, which recounts the story of her long and fierce personal struggle as a woman in the surfing world, her testimony stands as a testament to inspire a new generation of women achieving gender equality.

© Maya Gabeira

> ***It's not enough to face the waves. You have to learn how to transform them.***
>
> ***Maya Gabeira***
> *UNESCO Champion for the Ocean and Youth*

© Guila Clara Kessous

GIVING VOICE TO WOMEN TO BUILD LASTING PEACE

Guila Clara Kessous uses her art as a powerful means to defend human rights. Appointed UNESCO Artist for Peace in 2012, she has worked for over a decade to amplify women's voices, especially those affected by conflict, displacement or injustice. Since 2021, she has organized the Femina Vox international forum on International Women's Day. This global platform offers space for those too often silenced, highlighting their stories, their struggles, and their solutions.

> ***Women must be granted the same rights as men, not because they are women, but because they are human beings.***
>
> ***Dr Guila Clara Kessous***
> *UNESCO Artist for Peace*

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DEFENDING ARTISTIC FREEDOM IN TIMES OF CRISIS

In contexts of crisis and conflict, women artists and journalists are often the first to be silenced. In April 2024, **Deeyah Khan** participated in the UNESCO roundtable "Defending Creative Voices: Protection of Artists in Times of Emergency".

A filmmaker and human rights activist, she denounced the growing threats to women who speak out publicly and called for robust policies to defend artistic freedom – especially for those on the frontlines of conflict.

> ***When women artists are silenced, society as a whole loses part of its humanity.***
>
> ***Deeyah Khan***
> *UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Artistic Freedom*

UNLOCKING GIRLS' POTENTIAL THROUGH SPORT AND SCIENCE

On 8 March 2024, for International Women's Day, UNESCO placed football at the heart of its advocacy for gender equality. The event "Scoring Goals for Women" brought together leading figures from the worlds of sport, education and development, united by a shared belief: sport is a powerful driver of empowerment.

Nadia Nadim delivered a moving message about her own journey – from Afghan refugee to international footballer and medical doctor. Her testimony was a powerful reminder that every girl, no matter her background, has the right to dream, to learn, and to succeed. She called for increased investment in sport as a key lever for achieving gender equality by 2030. A few weeks later, during the L'Oréal-UNESCO *For Women in Science* International Awards 2024, she once again inspired audiences by sharing her story of resilience, highlighting the unwavering support of her mother and her thirst for knowledge as the foundations of her path to success.

© Nadia Nadim

> ***Football taught me how to be strong. Today, I want every girl to have the same chance I had.***
>
> ***Nadia Nadim***
> *UNESCO Champion for Girls' and Women's Education*

CHAMPIONING EDUCATION FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN

Since her appointment in 2014 as UNESCO's Special Envoy for the Promotion of Girls' and Women's Education, **Professor Peng Liyuan**, First Lady of the People's Republic of China, has championed girls' and women's empowerment by amplifying the impact of initiatives that promote inclusive quality education.

The *UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education*, established in 2016 with the support of the Government of China, celebrates transformative projects that open doors to learning and inspire global action for equal access. In 2024, marking a decade of her involvement with UNESCO in this role, Professor Peng Liyuan conveyed her congratulations to the laureates from Uganda and Zambia, each awarded US$50,000 to further their efforts in advancing educational opportunities for girls and women.

In October 2025, during UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay's visit to China, Professor Peng Liyuan joined the Director-General in reaffirming their shared commitment to advancing girls' and women's education – particularly in science and technology – further strengthening collaboration between UNESCO and China in this global priority area.

© COMEO/Federic Legrand

> ***Girls' and women's education has a bearing on their growth and development, the well-being of numerous families, and the world's future.***
>
> ***Professor Peng Liyuan***
> *UNESCO Special Envoy for the Promotion of Girls' and Women's Education*

© Julio Piatti

ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH SOLIDARITY AND JUSTICE

Appointed UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador in 1997, **Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg** has long championed women's rights and education. As President of the Grand Duke Henri and Grand Duchess Maria Teresa Foundation, she supports women's empowerment and the fight against sexual violence. Through her deep and sustained commitment to survivors, she advocates for gender equality to be achieved not only through laws and policies – but also through compassion, solidarity, and concrete action on the ground.

> ***Fighting violence against women is not just a cause, it is a duty of humanity.***
>
> ***H.R.H. Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg***
> *UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador*

ART FOR ALL: A CATALYST FOR CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Naomi Kawase, appointed UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Cultural and Creative Industries in 2021, embodies the power of artistic engagement in advancing gender equality. She is particularly committed to strengthening the visibility of women directors and creating spaces for women's voices in cinema. In this spirit, she partnered with UNESCO to launch the *UNESCO-Nara Residency*, designed to support young African women filmmakers by offering them concrete opportunities in film production and creation. Her artistic work, imbued with deep human sensitivity, transcends national borders and gives voice to women in diverse contexts.

© Dreamstime/ Denis Makarenko

> ***I believe strongly in the power of creative expression. In times of inequality and discrimination, these spaces of expression turn our attention away from ourselves and force us to think for a moment about the 'other'.***
>
> ***Naomi Kawase,*** *UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Cultural and Creative Industries*

© Urko Suaya

Since 2022, Spanish artist and actress **Rossy de Palma** has championed creativity, cultural diversity and gender equality alongside UNESCO. In March 2025, on International Women's Day, she delivered the keynote speech at the 2025 Mondiacult Thematic Global Consultation, "Art for All", an event celebrating women's creativity and advocating for equal access to cultural life. The event shed light on the systemic barriers that limit women's participation in the cultural sector, while showcasing inclusive initiatives driving change. Rossy de Palma delivered a powerful call for an equitable representation of women in art history and on the contemporary art scene and called for culture to be open, fair and accessible – where women's voices are not the exception, but a vital force for transformation.

> ***The situation of women in culture concerns everyone and demands our collective commitment. We live in a world shaped by inequality, no matter what our background is.***
>
> ***Rossy de Palma,*** *UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Cultural Diversity*

Tribute to Claudia Cardinale

A UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador since March 2000, the legendary actress **Claudia Cardinale** – who embodied women's struggle to assert their rights – passed away at the age of 87 on 23 September 2025. As part of her commitment to UNESCO, Claudia Cardinale worked actively to improve the situation and living conditions of girls and women, notably through education.

© Everett Collection/Shutterstock*

IN CLOSING

The path to gender equality has never been a smooth journey; it has been marked by highs and lows, moments of clarity, and zones of turbulence. This biennium – characterized by a dramatic upsurge in crises and conflicts, and a fragilization of the instruments protecting our most fundamental values – has once again demonstrated that, when the world is in turmoil, the fundamental rights of women and girls are the first to be challenged, the first to come under threat.

And yet, it is precisely in these moments of uncertainty that commitment to gender equality becomes all the more vital. UNESCO has ensured that gender equality remains a global priority and an essential driver for achieving tangible results. Changing lives with education, reconciling humanity with nature, building just, inclusive, and peaceful societies, and fostering technology that serves humanity cannot be achieved unless half of humanity is at the heart of all actions, programmes, and policies supported by UNESCO.

> *"UNESCO has ensured that gender equality remains a global priority and an essential driver for achieving tangible results.*

Thanks to our partners and an increase of funding supported by a rise in the Regular Programme Budget allocated to the Division for Gender Equality, it has been possible to scale up activities, address certain gaps, enhance synergies with the Global Priority Africa, strengthen support for youth and SIDS, place greater focus on disability and inclusion, and ultimately unlock the full potential of gender equality as a powerful connector across sectors and a key enabler of UNESCO's unique mandate.

This was made possible by the implementation of a bold strategy, a better-structured gender equality architecture, the development of practical and tailored made implementation tools, the establishment of effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as by translating our mantra into action – making gender equality at UNESCO "everybody's business."

Moving from pledge to progress is a collective responsibility for everyone at UNESCO – it is a day-to-day work that must be carried out at every level, from the field to the global stage. During this biennium, a contextualized and participatory capacity-building programme was implemented to ensure broad ownership of the Global Priority Gender Equality.

Support was provided to launch pilot initiatives, promote innovative practices, and create a supportive environment to amplify UNESCO's impact in the field.

The mainstreaming of gender equality across all of UNESCO's strategic objectives, along with the design of a clear framework focused on well-defined areas of work, has proven successful and demonstrated that gender equality isn't a sideline, but a core commitment and a pillar underpinning all we do and strive for.

Additionally, the introduction of new mechanisms for planning, monitoring, and financial tracking – with the immediate incorporation of the new UN Gender Equality Markers – has marked a significant step forward. These tools provide a transparent and systematic way to monitor progress, enabling UNESCO to allocate resources more effectively, increase accountability, and identify gaps to drive real progress toward gender equality.

The results of this comprehensive strategy were clearly reflected in the synthesis of UNESCO evaluations, which noted remarkable progress towards gender equality across UNESCO's regions and sectors.

© UNESCO / Maria Etchegoyen

These structural advances have established UNESCO's undisputed comparative advantages in education, science, culture, communication and information, and ocean sciences on the global stage, enabling effective advocacy and advancing gender equality as a cornerstone of multilateralism.

UNESCO has continued its pioneering role in driving innovations and forward thinking – collecting data, empowering women artists, journalists, scientists and activists, and highlighting the costs of inequality for development and the future of humanity. As a global leader in AI ethics, governance, and neurotechnology, UNESCO cannot waver in its mission to ensure that technology serves also women and girls from all background. Groundbreaking and unprecedented studies have been conducted to shed light on the need for gender equality in AI, cultural policymaking, new trends in education as well as in the fields of ocean science, water, crises, and emergencies.

All of these actions by UNESCO this biennium echo renewed commitment to gender equality, as demonstrated by the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, the launch of the UN Gender Equality Acceleration Plan and the commemorations of the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the 25th anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security resolution.

This biennium, we are better structured and better equipped to continue the path toward gender equality, with the same eagerness and energy. As the world risks standing at a crossroads for gender equality, the Global Priority Gender Equality cannot move from rhetoric to results without the support and active engagement of all our partners and with a sustainable and predictable funding to deliver credibly and effectively for every woman, every girl, and for everyone, everywhere, in the interest of all humanity.

Begoña Lasagabaster
Director of the Division for Gender Equality

NOTES

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LIST OF BOXES

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Box 1 Strengthening the Integration of Gender Equality into Jordan's Education System 17
Box 2 Transforming Lives: UNESCO Champions Educational Equality for Girls across Africa 19
Box 3 Her Education, Our Future: Documentary Film on How Education Transformed the Lives of Girls in Brazil, Pakistan and Tanzania 20
Box 4 Transforming Teaching Across the Caribbean 22
Box 5 AI to Advance Health and Well-being Education in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe 23
Box 6 #EDUCASTEM2030 Brazil 24

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

Box 1 Breaking Gender Barriers in STEM in South-East Europe and the Mediterranean 34
Box 2 Arab Women in Science Platform 35
Box 3 Gender-Responsive Climate Education in Central Asia 37
Box 4 A Call for Women in Science, Not in Silence 38
Box 5 The Women of Malolo Island: Champions of Water Resilience 40

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Box 1 UNESCO's Caribbean Sheroes Initiative Challenges Gender-Based Violence 50
Box 2 University Students Combatting Gender-based Violence on Kenyan Campuses 51
Box 3 Champions Without Barriers Through Sport in Peru 52
Box 4 Violence-Free Media: Addressing Gender Violence in Latin American Journalism 53
Box 5 Girls for Culture | Culture for Girls in Senegal 55
Box 6 UNESCO Champions Gender Equality in the Global Music Industry 56

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

Box 1 Red Teaming Artificial Intelligence for Social Good – The Playbook 69
Box 2 Social Media for Peace and Gender-Responsive MIL 71
Box 3 UNESCO Amplifies Women's Voices Against Digital Hate Speech In Kyrgyzstan 72
Box 4 Game Jams for Gender Equality in Argentina 74
Box 5 Building Digital Skills for Girls in the Philippines 74

CROSS-CUTTING THEME

Box 1 Afghanistan's Education Crisis: Making A Stand 83
Box 2 Resilience through STEM Education in Palestine 84
Box 3 UNESCO's Global Survey on Women, Culture and Emergencies 87
Box 4 The Baalbeck Festival is Transforming Women's Roles in Lebanon's Cultural Scene 88
Box 5 UNESCO's Gender Equality Initiatives Supported by the UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund 90
Box 6 UNESCO's Contributions to Implementing the Sendai Gender Action Plan 90

UNESCO in Action for **GENDER EQUALITY**

This biennial report highlights UNESCO's action to advance gender equality and empower women and girls in and through education, sciences, culture, communication and information during the 2024-2025 period.

This fourth edition offers a comprehensive assessment of gender equality across UNESCO's mandate, grounded in its own data and research. It showcases how UNESCO has driven change and delivered key results with its partners through its strategic and programmatic efforts – as a laboratory of ideas, a clearing house, a standard-setter, a catalyst for international cooperation, and a capacity builder.

In a global context marked by escalating crises and a growing backlash against gender equality, the report demonstrates UNESCO's leadership and trailblazing role in promoting inclusive and healthy learning environments, raising the profile of women scientists, combating gender-based violence with the support of men and boys, foster safe digital spaces for women and girls, and protecting the lives and rights of women journalists, artists and scientists in crisis settings.

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